Expanded training facility bolsters Cassopolis golf program
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Stay Safe

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Today's The Herald-Palladium included inside

Niles Star

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'Big Fish' makes a splash at LMC

Lake Michigan College spring musical highlights the power of connection

By RALPH HEIBUTZKI
Leader Correspondent

BENTON HARBOR — When Lake Michigan College theatre instructor Shalico Sain was looking at options for this year's spring musical, "Big Fish" stood out for one reason: the power of connection.

The musical is an adaptation of the 2003 Tim Burton film, which follows the relationship between traveling salesman Edward Bloom and his son, Will, who struggles to understand and connect with his father.

"It's just a really beautiful story," Sain said. "I lost my dad to cancer a couple years ago, so for me, it was a heartfelt way to pay homage to my own father as well. Reading the story, I was personally touched by it. I thought it would be a good way to process that myself, and also tell those stories about family and connection."

Don Campbell / PMG

"Big Fish" is a Broadway musical adapted from the screenplay of Tim Burton's 2003 film of the same name.

"Big Fish" will take the stage 7 p.m. Saturday and 2 p.m. Sunday at the Lake Michigan College Mendel Center Jenkins Theatre, 1100 Yore Ave., Benton Harbor.

LMC's Visual & Performing Arts Department is presenting "Big Fish" by special arrangement with Theatrical Rights Worldwide of New York City, N.Y.

Sain said John August adapted the screenplay for the 2003 film from a novel by Daniel Wallace, then adapted his work for the Broadway musical, which opened in 2013. According to Sain, however, the musical differs from the film in one key aspect.

"In the film, they have two people playing past and present versions of Edward Bloom – Ewan McGregor and Albert Finney. In the Broadway version, it's meant to be one person playing the past Edward and current Edward," she said.

That difference set up a critical choice for LMC's production, which follows the dual casting of the movie.

Making that choice allowed Sain to cast a cross-section of 36 LMC student actors and veterans of local productions. This made for a

See **BIG FISH**, page A6

Home is where the art is

Artist Nancy S. Drew hosts living estate sale

By MAXWELL HARDEN
max.harden@leaderpub.com

NILES — A renowned artist and designer's Niles home will host a "spring cleaning" event community members will not want to miss.

Nancy S. Drew is hosting a living estate sale at her home at 524 Cedar St. The sale began Thursday and Friday and takes place from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday. The sale will transform Drew's home into a treasure trove of items Drew has collected and over the years – antiques, china and dishes, wool throws, vintage linens, lamps, rugs, vintage purses and hats, books, trinket boxes, upholstered chairs – including dozens of one-of-a-kind art pieces created by Drew.

"I'm 77, and I've collected for over 50 years," she said. "I had some people come over and they said it's like a museum to them. I thought to myself, 'I can't leave this for my children because they're going to go bananas trying to walk in here and figure out what to do.' It was a good time to say, 'Maybe we'll just clean house a little bit.'"

Drew's creations have appeared in art galleries across the country. Her cartoons have been syndicated in the Chicago Tribune and she has published special cartoons exclusive to the Detroit News and the South Bend Tribune. Drew has more than 15 self-published books to her name and prominent figures including Diana Nyad, Joan Esposito and Tracy Pollan have purchased her work.

Photo provided

Nancy S. Drew is preparing to host a living estate sale at her Niles home.

"I'm just a regular person, and I'm really happy that I've been able to make art all of my life," she said. "I am still making art, so that makes me happy."

While going through all of her items was daunting at first, Drew has enjoyed the experience.

"Surprisingly, once I got started, I had the support of people saying, 'Let's just pull this stuff out,' You know those signs that say 'Everything must go?' I'm thinking, 'Sure, everything has to go.' It has been shockingly helpful to go through it in a happy way… In the beginning, when I thought of doing this, I thought, 'Oh my gosh, what will people think?' They're going to come in here and see something very unusual. It's like dark chocolate; some people like it and some don't.

"Then there is the matter of having people in your home," she continued. "I'm told all the time by the people who care for me that they're not going to say anything terrible. I don't know, but again, it just makes me so happy that people respond to my work."

Taking inventory of her collections gave Drew an opportunity to reflect on her long, storied career and how her art has evolved.

"When I put things together and pulled things out, I saw a lot of that time and I was surprised," she said. "It was all similar. The style has changed a little bit, but

See **DREW**, page A6

EDWARDSBURG

Boy Scouts to paint village fire hydrants

By JUSTIN FLAGEL
Leader Correspondent

EDWARDSBURG — The Edwardsburg Village Council accepted assistance in refreshing fire hydrants and discussed water rates at their regular meeting on Monday, March 16.

Boy Scout Jackson Grall presented a proposal as part of his Eagle Scout pursuit to assist the village in painting fire hydrants. Of the one hundred and fifty-six hydrants in Edwardsburg, Grall would paint the seventy-five most in need, as identified by the Department of Public Works, finishing by the time he graduates high school. Another scout is already planning to paint the balance of the hydrants in the future.

The council voted to approve providing paint and supplies for the seventy-five hydrants at a cost not to exceed $1,600. Grall will proceed with the work under advisement of DPW, once the weather allows.

The council voted to increase water rates by 3 percent, the first increase in rates in four years. The goal of the increase is to build a fund for maintenance, replacement, and preparation for catastrophic failures.

The village is also replacing water meters, as the current meters are no longer supported. The new system offers increased efficiency, more accurate tracking utilizing emergency cellular lines, and will allow homeowners access to an app to track their own water usage.

Village President Dennis Peak reported 800 visitors attended the two-day grand opening of the new Edwardsburg Branch of the Cass District Library.

"I think it's gonna be great for our community," said Trustee Laura Hughes, who represents the Library Board.

Peak expressed excitement about the new building and reminded the council of the need to consider possible uses for the old building. A variety of ideas have been discussed, including a senior center, food bank, or other type of community center. The village will officially take control of the building from the library on June 2nd.

Peak announced a silent auction for the furniture, shelving, and any other supplies from the old library that were not able to be used in the new location. The auction will likely be announced for April.

See **EDWARDSBURG**, page A4

Buchanan man receives prison sentence for fatal OWI crash

By DEBRA HAIGHT
Leader Correspondent

NILES — William "Mack" Isom's family and friends have been waiting three years, eight months and three days to get justice for him and Monday they got it. The man convicted of driving drunk and killing Isom in July 2022 was sentenced Monday to a 57-month prison term.

Taylor Ryan Johnson, 38, of Buchanan, was convicted of driving while intoxicated causing death by a Berrien County Trial Court jury in early February. Monday, Berrien County Trial Court Judge Gordon Hosbein sentenced Johnson to 57 months to 15 years in prison.

JOHNSON

Johnson has credit for 56 days already served and must pay $258 in fines and costs. A hearing will be held at a later date to determine restitution from requests submitted by Isom's family for funeral related and travel expenses.

Isom was a Berrien County Road Department worker clearing brush from the roadway on Red Bud Trail in Oronoko Township when he was killed July 20, 2022. Monday, the courtroom was crowded with dozens of his family members, friends, co-workers and other county employees.

Johnson's blood alcohol level was found to be .134 after the incident and the investigation showed that he had been speeding up to 70 miles per hour before hitting Isom. Johnson had been part of a fishing party earlier in the day and is believed to have been drinking both then and later at an area restaurant before heading back to Buchanan.

Isom's brother, Frank, was the first person to speak on behalf of himself and his father, Reuben. "I've been waiting to give this statement for three years, eight months and three days," he said. "That's 1,342 agonizing days."

"A lot of people thought we were twins, we were connected in blood, spirit and soul," he said. "Mack was my biggest supporter and fierce protector … We didn't grow up with money but we grew up with values. We learned the most important aspect of survival is taking care of others and that was our fortune."

"Mack and I made a pack a long time ago," Frank Isom added. "We would take care of Dad, Mack owned a house on the same road as my Dad where we grew up and he would be Dad's caretaker. Mack planned to retire early and be Dad's caretaker but Mr. Johnson changed that. The most shattering part about losing Mack was watching my Dad's health decline."

"My father's not the same person he was on July 19, 2022," he said. "Dad had a spark in his soul and a twinkle in his eye. I've watched these qualities fade and grow dark, but the worst thing is watching his convictions die. Dad believed that people were inherently good and would do the right thing. Watching him change and see the world more darkly has been like losing him too."

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Doris Womack
Ramona Hines
Stephen Sayer

hp FOOD
A legacy of love
Michigan woman explores family roots in Lebanese baking cookbook

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Comics	B5	Home & Garden	C7	Television	D3

FRANKLY

Tips and quips

What is Frankly? It is where readers sound off on issues of the day. Have a tip or a quip? Call Frankly at 269-687-7700 or email rich.cains@leaderpub.com.

■ Thank you, Bobcats for a great season. I enjoyed watching you play.

■ After they raised our taxes to cover expenses, SMCAS is considering merging with someone else. Does that mean our taxes go down or is it going to cost us more? Never ending.

■ Congratulations Dowagiac February students of the month. We are so proud of you.

■ Robert Mueller enlisted in the Marines, served in Vietnam, was shot and received the Purple Heart. Trump, had five deferments and the last being for bone spurs diagnosed by a doctor who rented an apartment from his dad.

■ Looks like Niles baseball started the season with a bang. Good luck Vikings.

■ I don't hear any bragging about low gas prices anymore. I have not seen the new healthcare plan that Trump has been touting since 2014. Every month he says, "you will be seeing it very, very soon."

■ I'm looking forward to spring sports. Hopefully mother nature cooperates.

■ Every week there is chaos in our government. People are sick of it. I'm ready for boring and normal for a change.

■ Thank goodness for March Madness. We all need a distraction from the ugliness happening around the world.

WEATHER

Saturday Night: Mostly cloudy, with a low around 36. South wind 5 to 10 mph, with gusts as high as 20 mph.

Sunday: Partly sunny, with a high near 58.

Sunday Night: Partly cloudy, with a low around 47.

Monday: A 20 percent chance of showers and thunderstorms after 2 p.m. Partly sunny, with a high near 69.

SMC previews nursing program

By JOHN EBY
Southwestern Michigan College

Photo provided

From left: Jaime Meahl, Austin Evans.

DOWAGIAC — Former Army medic Austin Evans and Buchanan's Jaime Meahl, following her twin sisters into nursing, offered student perspectives at March 19's Southwestern Michigan College program preview.

Meahl graduates in May. Evans is halfway through the flexible, nationally-accredited program.

Had she not been able to attend part-time while working, "I probably never would have done it," said Meahl. "I've been exposed to lots of facets of nursing through this program. Some I hadn't been aware of before. I'm going into ER, hospice or babies. I might get my bachelor's and teach because I like sharing what I've learned. My sisters came to this school, which led me here. Dr. Kennedy, now dean, was their teacher.

"The longevity people have with this program speaks to the quality. Everyone cares a lot. You feel that going through with individual attention and a nursing success and retention coach."

Mollie Grabemeyer, who is not a nurse, draws on her background in psychology and holistic health to manage stress, reduce anxiety and remove barriers.

"There are so many resources," from tutors to a monthly learning community for guest speakers, workshops and networking.

Evans, 30, qualified for the Michigan Reconnect program for free or reduced tuition for residents 25 and older. "I've paid like $35 out of pocket so far."

"What I enjoy about this program," Evans said, "is the sense that they really want to make good nurses. This program makes it very easy to be successful because you feel prepared for actual nursing, which is so broad you can go anywhere. I like being in one of the most respected professions. I'm a nerd when it comes to continual learning. Being a professional helper is fulfilling." He went to school in Constantine, Elkhart and Edwardsburg and is engaged to be married.

"Caring for everyone from NICU children to geriatric patients in long-term care facilities is an opportunity that doesn't come to many people," Evans said. "I plan to work in an emergency department. The action, the variety of patients. I'd like to get my master's at some point and work with the (Veterans Administration). I would love to do it all. We have other medical fields if you find out nursing is not your jam."

Dean Dr. Melissa Kennedy, an SMC graduate who joined the faculty in 2011, elaborated on her program's flexibility.

"You can go fulltime. You can go part-time. You can ebb and flow as life happens," she said. "It's up to you because our goal is to get you through nursing school. You have the opportunity to earn stackable credentials. After first semester, you're eligible to sit for your CNA licensure exam. After second semester and a seven-week class, you're eligible to sit for LPN licensure. After third and fourth semesters, you sit for RN.

"We look for a 2.75 GPA on five prerequisite courses to accept you into our program. Also unique to SMC among nursing programs in our service area is that we do clinicals in both Indiana and Michigan. You get to experience two major health systems, Beacon and Corewell."

Department Chair Rona Goodrich, a nurse for 34 years, including 17 in home care, joined SMC 10 years ago. She teaches pharmacology and medical/surgical nursing.

SMC admits 80 nursing students each year – 40 in Fall (applications due June 1) and 40 in Spring (Nov. 1). In the SMC Nursing Building, sixteen beds are set up like hospital rooms. The four-room sim lab has two control rooms.

"Simulation promotes critical judgment and thinking," Goodrich said. "The instructor is not in the room with students, but in the control room with the sim lab coordinator (Victoria Christen) so students can work it out on their own. Based on how students respond, we can cause blood pressure to drop or we can make the patient be confused. It's a safe place to learn. Our manikins can talk and answer questions. We can program different lung or heart sounds. With Hal Jr. (one of the manikins), you can poke his finger and get 'blood' so you can check his sugar with a glucometer. With 'Big Hal,' you can do CPR and defibrillate, or do urinary catheterizations. The birthing manikin has different bellies and the baby she delivers is functional, too."

"The first seven weeks, students learn skills – blood pressure, vital signs, bathing, transferring, putting in catheters," Goodrich continued. "The second seven weeks is at a long-term care facility with real patients. We do three med/surg rotations – first, on a post-op floor, second on an oncology floor and third, a cardiac floor. We also do some specialties – psycho-social, pediatrics and obstetrics."

Manager of Admissions and Adult Recruitment Coordinator Ben Spencer provided an overview of the admissions process and opportunities for financial aid. Twenty-seven attendees toured the simulation lab to see the manikins in action.

Berrien County Youth Fair names grandstand lineup

By PMG STAFF

Photo provided

Country star Jackson Dean will take the stage at 7 p.m. Aug. 19 at the Berrien County Youth Fair.

BERRIEN SPRINGS — Berrien County Youth Fair officials have announced the 2026 lineup of grandstand entertainment acts for the year.

According to a news release, at 7 p.m. Aug. 19 country star Jackson Dean will take the stage, presented by United Federal Credit Union.

With his strong gravel-toned vocals, wayward spirit, intentional songwriting and overall mystique, the fast-rising singer/songwriter Jackson Dean has earned a reputation for his live shows and thought-provoking, lyric-driven music.

The young talent burst on the scene in 2022 with his atmospheric, musically-forward debut album "Greenbroke" that featured his Platinum-debut single, "Don't Come Lookin'," which cemented Jackson as the youngest solo male country artist to reach the top of the charts with a debut, and his Gold-certified follow-up single "Fearless (The Echo)."

His live show stand-out and No. 1 single "Heavens To Betsy" marked the lead track from his "... near-perfect follow-up" sophomore album "On The Back Of My Dreams," released in 2024 via Big Machine Records.

The demand for Jackson skyrocketed after landing a coveted spot on artist to watch lists by Pandora, Spotify, Apple Music, Amazon and CMT, as well as an ACM New Male Artist of the Year nomination in 2023. A vocalist who thrives on stage, the Maryland native has leaned hard into touring, building a passionate fanbase.

Ever evolving and expanding into new territory both sonically and lyrically, Dean released new tracks "Be Your Man" and "Make A Liar" in 2025, and his track "Turn On The Lights" was used for T-Mobile's Friday Night 5G Lights 2025 competition. He just wrapped a run of his headlining On The Back Of My Dreams World Tour in Australia and New Zealand and closed out 2025 opening on select dates of Brad Paisley's Truck Still Works Tour.

Tickets for all grandstand shows are on sale now at the fair office, online at www.bcyf.org or by phone at 269-473-1500. Grandstand ticket fees do not include gate admission. All tickets purchased online will have an additional per ticket processing fee and a credit card convenience fee.

The 2026 Berrien County Youth Fair runs Aug. 17-22 with the theme of "Happy Birthday America."

One killed after vehicle catches fire in Jefferson Township crash

By PMG STAFF

A 66-year-old Mishawaka man died Wednesday after their vehicle caught fire following a crash into a tree in Jefferson Township, according to the Central Cass Fire Department.

At approximately 4:45 p.m. Wednesday, the Central Cass Fire Department was dispatched to the area of Oil City Road near M-62 for a reported crash with unknown injuries, along with reports of a vehicle on fire.

Upon arrival, crews found a single vehicle that had crashed into a tree and was fully involved in fire. The driver, 66-year-old Todd Willingham of Mishawaka, who was the sole occupant of the vehicle, was pronounced deceased at the scene.

CCFD was assisted on scene by SMCAS Ambulance and the scene was turned over to the Cass County Sheriff's Office for further investigation.

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OBITUARIES

Richard Accoe

Richard Accoe, 80, of Dowagiac, MI passed away Wednesday, March 18, 2026 at Corewell Health Lakeland Hospital in St. Joseph.

A Mass will be celebrated at 11:00 A.M., Tuesday, March 24, 2026 at Holy Maternity of Mary Catholic Church, 210 N. Front St. Dowagiac, MI 49047.

Friends may visit with the family from 5:00 P.M. until 7:00 P.M., with the rosary recited at 6:45 P.M., Monday March 23, 2026 at Clark Chapel and Cremation Service, 405 Center St., Dowagiac, MI 49047. Memorials may be made to the Cassopolis FFA, Holy Maternity of Mary Catholic Church or the Accoe Family Endowment at SMC. Those wishing to share a memory of Richard online may do so at www.clarkch.com.

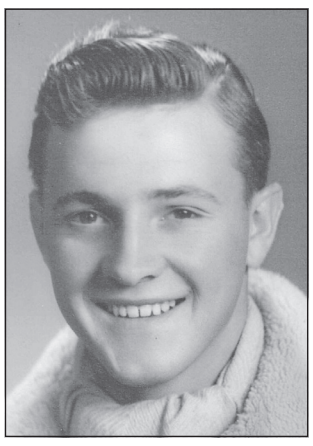
Richard was born on May 29, 1945, in South Bend, Indiana, to Richard M. and Pauline M. (Monhaut) Accoe. He graduated from Dowagiac High School in 1963 and went on to earn his degree from Southwestern Michigan College. On November 21, 1964, he married Lynn M. Parrish in Dowagiac, Michigan. Richard was a lifelong farmer who was deeply dedicated to his work.

In addition to farming, he worked as a real estate agent with Springsteen Real Estate, served as a Cass County Commissioner, and was employed by Rudy (Sundstrand) Manufacturing Company. Richard was a devoted member of the Knights of Columbus, attaining both Third and Fourth Degrees with the Dowagiac council, and was honored as Knight of the Year in 1992 as well as earning family of the year.

He was also active in Jail Ministries, served as a past 4-H leader, and was a former member of the Cass County Posse. Richard is survived by his wife Lynn Accoe; four daughters Shelli (Randy) Armstrong, Sherri (Wesley F.) Eichler, Anne (Rodric Williams) Dean and Judi (Andrew) Kidman; 13 grandchildren; 13 great grandchildren; siblings Kathy Orr, Mike (Sue) Accoe and Dave (Patti) Accoe; several nieces and nephews; and the Wahoo & Caruso coffee buds. Richard was preceded in death by his parents.

Earl Hansen

January 14, 1927 – March 13, 2026



Earl Norman Hansen, 99, of Niles, died peacefully, Friday, March 13, 2026. His life began January 14, 1927 in Stanton, Michigan the third of three born to Harold and Jessie Hansen.

Earl graduated from Eau Claire High School in 1945. He then went on to serve his country in the Army Air Corp. during World War II. Shortly after, he married Audrey Leiting on September 4, 1949. Earl worked for Kawneer for nine years and then went on to work for National Standard for over thirty years before retiring. He was a member of Berrien Center Bible Church where he was involved as a board member and head usher. Earl and Audrey volunteered their time at the Berrien County Youth Fair, both at the gates and in the Grandstands for over sixty years.

Earl will be greatly missed by family and friends. He is survived by one daughter, Diane K. (Dr. James) Grannell of Niles; one son, Kirk W. (Debra) Hansen of Niles; four grandchildren, Dr. Justin (Alicia) Grannell, Josh (Marissa) Grannell, Jami Grannell, Jenna Grannell; six great grandchildren, Peyton, Connor, Jade, Jaren, Vivian, Jovi Grannell and a number of nieces and nephews. He was preceded in death by his wife of sixty-four years, Audrey Hansen; one daughter, Dawn Hansen; one sister Viola Rudowske of Watkinsville, Georgia and one brother, Maurice Hansen of Berrien Center.

Family and friends will gather Monday, March 23, 2026 from 6:00 p.m. until 8:00 p.m. in Halbritter Wickens Funeral Services, 615 East Main Street, Niles and one hour prior to his service on Tuesday, March 24, 2026 at 10:00 a.m. in Berrien Center Bible Church, 8830 M-140 Berrien Center, Michigan 49102. Earl will be laid to rest next to his beloved wife, Audrey in Mission Hills Memorial Gardens.

The family prefers contributions in memory of Earl be made to Berrien Center Bible Church 8830 M-140 Berrien Center, Michigan 49102 or the Berrien County Youth Fair 9122 US-Highway 31 Box 7 Berrien Springs, Michigan 49103. Arrangements have been entrusted to Halbritter Wickens Funeral Services, Niles. Please share a memory or a message online: halbritterwickens.com.

Doris Womack

February 1, 1938 – March 23, 2026

Doris Jean Womack, a beacon of love and kindness, passed away peacefully on March 23, 2026, at the age of 88 surrounded by her family.

Born on February 1, 1938, in Mishawaka, IN to Enoch and Linnie (Cottrell) Swartz. Doris's life was a testament to her unwavering dedication to her family, her passion for her flowers, and her commitment to community service.

Doris's life was rich with the joy of family. She was a cherished mother to Annette (Tom) Beck and Michael (Jana) Zelasko and stepmom to Linda (Kim) Wright. Her role as a mother was only surpassed by the love and wisdom she bestowed upon her grandchildren, Nicholas (Emily) Crouch, Bart (Jessica) Crouch, Jennifer Zelasko, Jessica (Rick) Moore, Joshua (Keli) Wright and Chad (Kimberly) Wright. Doris's legacy continued to flourish through her 13 great-grandchildren, Ellie, Grace, Megan, Quinn, and Elizabeth Crouch, Eli and Ethan Grant, and Logan, Jenson, Evalyn, Alicia, Angelina and Jaden Wright as well as several great-great-grandchildren, and many nieces and nephews of whom brought her immense pride and happiness.

Doris was preceded in death by her parents Enoch and Linnie Swartz, her brother Gerald and sister Glendora, In the Spring of 1961 she met a handsome young marine who would later become the love of her life, husband, and partner in crime Robert Parker. They married on August 26,1961 and stayed happily married until his passing on January 20, 1995.

She later re-connected with and married her second husband Landon Womack and remained married until his passing on September 28, 2022. Her favorite niece and devoted caregiver, Vickie Bennett, stood by her side offering lots of laughter, comfort and companionship throughout her final years. The bond they shared was a true reflection of Doris's capacity for nurturing deep and lasting relationships. Vickie promised to continue caring for her beloved companion Connor.

Doris's love for the natural world was evident to all who knew her. She found solace in the company of her birds and plants, and her hands were often seen tending to her beloved yard. Her artistic spirit shone through in her love for beautifully tended flower beds, and her compassion for animals was boundless.

Living by example of always giving back to her community, Doris was a proud volunteer at the Niles Civitan Club, where she contributed her time and talents for the betterment of others.She was a member of Psi Iota Xi sorority Zeta Theta chapter (aka, The Pickle Ladies), which raises money for art, literature and music programs locally. Her pioneering spirit was also evident as a founding member of the Barron Lake Association, where she worked tirelessly to ensure the preservation and enjoyment of the local natural beauty for future generations.

Those who had the privilege of knowing Doris will remember her as the embodiment of love, kindness, and wisdom. Her gentle guidance and warm heart left a lasting impact on everyone she encountered. Doris's memory will continue to inspire those who were fortunate enough to have felt the warmth of her beautiful smile.

In keeping with Doris's wishes services will be held on Monday, March 30, with a visitation from 4:00-6:00 PM with a service following at Palmer Funeral Home-Hoven Chapel. Donations in Doris's honor may be made to Corewell Hospice, https://give.corewellhealth.org/hospice-donation.

If you would like to leave online condolences for Doris and her family please visit www.palmerfuneralhomes.com.

Georgina 'Gina' Dunham

August 16, 1938 – November 20, 2025

Georgina Barron "Gina" Dunham, 87, of Niles, died peacefully Thursday, November 20, 2025 in the comfort of her family's presence. Her life began August 16, 1938 in Cheboygan, Michigan the only child born to Frank and Jean Barron.

She married Richard J. "Dick" Dunham in June 1961 in Trinity Episcopal Church, Niles. After fifty-four years of marriage, he preceded her in death August 23, 2015. Gina cherished her family as they were the guiding force. She was a member and President, at one time, of the Niles Garden Club. She was also a member of Seepewa Reading Club. She was a 1956 graduate of Niles High School. She was a life long member of Trinity Episcopal Church in Niles and was the historian of the church.

Gina majored in history and minored in English Literature at Indiana University where she graduated with a Bachelors Degree. She and Dick enjoyed traveling. After his retirement, they drove to and around Alaska for at least six weeks. They also traveled to Scotland and Ireland. The family has fond memories of camping trips in rustic areas. She was an avid reader, especially historical fiction.

Gina will be greatly missed by family and friends. She is survived by her three sons, Sean (Jennifer) Dunham of Bemidji, Minnesota, Daniel (Hanh) Dunham of Tarpon Springs, Florida, James Dunham of White Pigeon; six grandchildren, Elaine Williams, Paige (Fred) Somes, Caroline Frandsen, Jessica Dunham, Bridget Dunham, Barron Dunham; two great grandchildren, Graham Somes, Eleanor Somes; and niece, Christine Phillips. She was preceded in death by her parents and her beloved husband.

Family and friends will gather for a Memorial Service Saturday, April 4, 2026 at 1:30 pm in Trinity Episcopal Church, 9 South Fourth Street, Niles. Gina will be encrypted with her husband in Silverbrook Cemetery. Arrangements have been entrusted to Halbritter Wickens Funeral Services, Niles. Please share a memory or a message online: halbritterwickens.com.

Robin Lintz

September 11, 1959 – March 20, 2026

Robin Joann Lintz, 66, of Niles Michigan, passed Friday March 20, 2026 in the comfort of her family's presence. Robin's life began on September 11, 1959 in Niles Michigan.

Robin enjoyed spending time with her family. She showed her love for them through her cooking and many meals she would prepare for them. She was the center and rock of the family. Her selflessness and heart of gold could be seen by the many people she helped. Robin was very passionate about playing Bingo and had a love for watching various game shows which she watched daily. Her dog Porkchop was the apple of Robin's eye.

Robin will be greatly missed by family and friends. She is survived by her sons, Brian (Sarah) Bunch of South Bend Indiana, Danny (Jamie) Bunch of Edwardsburg Michigan, Daughter; Ashley Bunch of Niles Michigan; Brother, Randy Lintz of Niles; Stepfather, Fred Goffeney of Niles; grandsons, Chris Tincher, Landon Church, Chais Church-Bunch; granddaughters, Tiffany Tincher, Onna Lintz, Dannie Bunch, Soraya Boros, Maylin Bunch, great grandchildren, Neviah Church, Kehlani Carter and a host of nieces and nephews. She was preceded in death by her mother, Marion Goffeney, father Charles Lintz Sr. Sister Pam Lintz, brother Charles Lintz Jr.

Family and friends will gather Thursday April 2, 2026 from 5:00-8:00 pm for visitation in Halbritter Wickens followed by a service on Friday April 3, 2026 at 11:00 am in Halbritter Wickens. Arrangements have been entrusted to Halbritter Wickens Funeral Services, Niles. Please share a memory or a message online: halbritterwickens.com.

Ramona Hines

Ramona Lee Hines, 94, of Berrien Springs,passed away March 18, 2026, in Berrien Springs, after a brief illness. Arrangements have been entrusted to Allred Funeral Home in Berrien Springs. www.AllredFuneralHome.com

Stephen Sayer

Stephen Douglas Sayer, 77, of Niles, Michigan, passed away on March 23, 2026. Arrangements have been entrusted to Brown Funeral Home & Cremation Services.

Obituary policy: Leader Publications publishes death notices at a cost of $15. Extended obituaries are priced based on character count. If there's an error because of a mistake made by the newspaper, the obituary will be reprinted at no charge. For more information, or to submit an obituary, email obits@leaderpub.com.

Housing sales, prices fall in Southwest Michigan market

February continues cold streak for homebuyers, sellers

By PMG STAFF

ST. JOSEPH — After a cold start in January for the Southwest Michigan housing market, the February activity did not defrost.

According to a report from the Southwestern Michigan Association of Realtors, the number of houses sold in February fell to 137 houses, the lowest level since 2009.

"The inventory of houses for sale, selling prices, and the mortgage rate all dropped below those in February 2025. Selling prices peaked in February 2025 in the year-over-year comparison that includes prices back to 2006," said Luke Jeffries, association executive of the Southwestern Michigan Association of Realtors.

In February 2026, Jeffries said the market ended with an inventory of 634 houses for sale, down 9 percent from the 699 houses for sale in February 2025.

Homebuyers were facing a 3.8-month supply of homes, up slightly from the 3.7 supply level in January 2026.

The number of houses sold in February 2026 decreased by 10 percent from what was sold in February 2025. Year-to-date, the number of houses sold decreased by 16 percent.

The average selling price at $338,348 in February 2026 dropped 19 percent from January 2026 and 18 percent from February 2025

The February 2026 median selling price slipped 5 percent below that in February 2025 – $272,000 vs. $285,000. The median selling price in January 2026 was $270,000.

The total dollar volume with fewer sales decreased by 20 percent to $108,987,203 from $135,435,416 in February 2025.

There were three bank-owned or foreclosed homes as a percentage of all transactions for Southwest Michigan homes in February, or 2 percent of all closed transactions. The highest percentage in February was 75 percent in 2009.

Across the country

Existing home sales increased by 1.7 percent month-over-month in February, according to the National Association of Realtors report.

The report provides the real estate ecosystem – including agents, homebuyers and sellers – with data on the level of home sales, price and inventory.

Month-over-month sales rose in the Midwest, South and West, but fell in the Northeast. Year-over-year sales rose in the South and fell in the Northeast, Midwest and West.

Total existing home sales increased 1.7 percent from month-over-month to a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 4.09 million in February. Year-over-year, sales decreased 1.4 percent.

"Housing affordability is improving, and consumers are responding," said NAR Chief Economist Lawrence Yun. "Still, there is a long way to go to return to pre-pandemic levels of transaction activity. There are more than 6 million more jobs than in 2019, yet home sales per year are down by 1 million."

The median existing home price for all housing types in February was $398,000, up 0.3 percent from one year ago.

"Despite the modest gain in home sales, actual housing demand remains muted relative to wage growth and job gains," Yun said. "Wage growth is now outpacing home price growth by almost four percentage points. Mortgage rates are also measurably lower compared to a year ago."

In the Midwest, existing-home sales in February increased 1.1 percent in sales month-over-month to an annual rate of 940,000, down 4.1 percent year-over-year.

Total housing inventory registered at the end of February was 1.29 million units, up 2.4 percent from January and 4.9 percent from one year ago.

"Inventory is growing, but sluggishly," Yun said. "If demand picks up notably in the coming months and outpaces supply growth, home prices will inevitably rise. That is why increasing supply is so important to help limit home price growth, improve housing affordability, and boost transactions."

Average U.S. long-term mortgage rate leaps to 6.38 percent

The average long-term U.S. mortgage rate climbed this week to its highest level in more than six months, driving up borrowing costs during what's typically the busiest time of the year for prospective homebuyers.

The benchmark 30-year fixed rate mortgage rate rose to 6.38 percent from 6.22 percent last week, mortgage buyer Freddie Mac said Thursday. One year ago, the rate averaged 6.65 percent. This marks the largest one-week increase since April 2025 and the largest three-week increase since October 2024, according to Realtor.com.

The last time the average rate was higher was Sept. 4, when it was at 6.5 percent.

When mortgage rates rise, they can add hundreds of dollars a month in costs for home shoppers, limiting what they can afford to buy.

Only four weeks ago, the average rate had dropped to just under 6 percent for the first time since late 2022, but it has been rising as skyrocketing oil prices due to the war with Iran fuel worries about high inflation.

– Alex Veiga, The Associated Press

Buchanan Chamber, Regional Chamber announce partnership

By PMG STAFF

BUCHANAN — The Buchanan Area Chamber of Commerce and the Southwest Michigan Regional Chamber of Commerce have announced a strategic partnership designed to strengthen business support, expand local capacity, and position the Greater Buchanan area for its next phase of economic growth.

Under the new agreement, the Buchanan Area Chamber will maintain its local identity, governance and membership while integrating into the Regional Chamber's operational infrastructure. The decision aims to preserve local leadership and focus while adding the benefits of enhanced advocacy, increased programmatic offerings, broader regional visibility and a more coordinated approach to economic and community development.

The partnership formalizes a longstanding relationship between the two organizations, which have previously collaborated on initiatives including the Buchanan Social District and key developments such as The Grant Hotel and McCollum's Restaurant and Bar. It also builds upon the support the Regional Chamber has provided to area municipalities like the City of Buchanan and Buchanan Charter Township.

"The City of Buchanan has long valued the support the Regional Chamber has given to our community, and a formal partnership with our local chamber will only multiply that impact," said Mark Weedon, Mayor of Buchanan. "It strengthens our ability to serve local businesses and positions Greater Buchanan for long-term growth and economic vitality."

The announcement arrives amid significant momentum in the Greater Buchanan area. Over the past eighteen months, the community has attracted substantial public and private investment in infrastructure, placemaking and redevelopment – accelerating recent economic activity.

It also marks the latest adoption of the Regional Chamber's regional growth strategy, with Buchanan joining Niles and Bridgman in a coordinated approach across local chambers. The model is designed to align communities, expand capacity, and translate local momentum into sustained economic impact across the region.

"We are thankful for the opportunity to more closely partner with the Buchanan Area Chamber and the Greater Buchanan community," said Arthur Havlicek, President & CEO of the Southwest Michigan Regional Chamber. "There's tremendous momentum in Buchanan, and we look forward to helping this community reach its full potential."

Havlicek credited the Buchanan Chamber Board of Directors for embracing a forward-looking approach that positions both the organization and the community for continued growth.

For their part, Buchanan Chamber Board Members emphasized that the partnership reflects a renewed commitment to strengthening the local Chamber's role in the community and rebuilding confidence among area businesses through consistent leadership, transparency, and expanded resources.

"This partnership with the Southwest Michigan Regional Chamber represents a fresh start and an opportunity to reset and refocus on the mission of the chamber. Our business community deserves strong support, collaboration, and a shared vision for growth. We recognize that trust has been strained in recent years, and rebuilding those relationships is essential moving forward," said Kyle Zelmer, Buchanan Area Chamber Board Chair.

Leaders say the new partnership will also seek to strengthen collaboration with organizations such as the Buchanan Downtown Development Authority and the Buchanan Business Boosters as the community continues to grow.

"By getting back to our roots and working alongside the Regional Chamber, Buchanan DDA, the Business Boosters, and our local business owners, we can work together to bring renewed energy, collaboration, and growth to Buchanan," Zelmer added.

Additional details regarding new programming, events, and initiatives will be shared in the coming weeks and months.

EDWARDSBURG

From page A1

The village is also seeking additional bids for the construction of a new sidewalk in front of the new library building.

Clean up from recent storms continues, though village staff have been hindered by recent snow. Richard Low of the DPW reported at least seven trees known to have fallen during the storms. It was noted that several trees around the village have been identified for removal due to danger of falling, with a plan to replant many of the trees once removed.

Several members of the council expressed their gratitude for the community in the wake of the most recent tornado, noting examples of residents assisting each other during outages and clean up and even donations coming in from out of state from former residents.

The cemetery board reported that columbariums purchased recently will be delivered and installed soon. They are also considering seeking donations to plant trees in the cemetery. It was also noted that clean up of fallen trees had begun by the owner of an adjacent private property visible from the cemetery.

Mount Calvary Church launches soup kitchen

By MAXWELL HARDEN
max.harden@leaderpub.com

NILES — A historic Niles church is making an impact in the community with food and fellowship.

Mount Calvary Baptist Church, 601 Ferry St., recently launched My Father's Soup Kitchen. The event, which takes place from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. every Saturday, aims to provide free meals for people and families from all walks of life.

"Here at Mount Calvary, what we want to do is to reach out to the community," said Minister Linda Bradford, who organized the soup kitchen. "We wanted to be an inspiration to the needy in the community and to be an immediate impact in our community. We want to provide a place that will serve free meals to individuals who are in need: the homeless, the unemployed, or otherwise, the people unable to meet their basic needs. We also want to serve hot and nutritious meals that will offer a Lifeline in times of uncertainty and we want to always create words to spread the gospel throughout this community."

Since its establishment in 1849, the church, formerly called Second Baptist, has been a pillar to the Ferry Street neighborhood. For Bradford and her volunteers, the soup kitchen is just the latest example of the church carrying out its mission of service in the Niles community.

"We want to promote kindness, we want to let people see the Christ in us," Bradford said. "We want to invite people to come and do fellowship with us and we think that serving them a nutritious meal will inspire them to come to Christ."

Bradford said that the name My Father's Soup Kitchen comes from the church carrying out its spiritual mission.

"I was inspired by the Holy Spirit," she said. "I had several names, but the Holy Spirit kept leading me back to MMy Father's Kitchen because we want people to know that this is a god-given kitchen for us to serve this community."

While the soup kitchen aims to meet the needs of the hungry, it also aims to serve as a place for fellowship, prayer and emotional support to those in need.

"We offer prayer to the ones that come in," Bradford said. "Last week, we had two couples that came in that desired prayer. We want them to know that we're here to pray for them as well as provide a healthy meal for them. We offer Christ to everyone who walks through the door."

Since launching the soup kitchen two weeks ago, Bradford said that attendance continues to grow. Last week's event had 40 people attend and the church has had several phone calls for delivery. Those looking to place delivery orders can call (269) 683-0243 during the soup kitchen's hours of operation.

"This is an inspiration for us to reach out to the community," she said.

Bradford said the church is accepting donations to support the soup kitchen. Funds donated will go towards food and soup kitchen supplies.

"We can use all the help that we can get because as we grow, we're going to need donations for this kitchen."

SENTENCED

From page A1

Frank Isom and Mack Isom's fiancée, Shelly Jasper, expressed disappointment both with Johnson and his attorneys over the numerous delays through the years as well as what they saw as Johnson's lack of remorse. Jasper described her grief as "unexplainable" and asked Judge Hosbein to send the message that Mack Isom's life mattered.

"He gave his life doing the job he loved," Assistant Prosecutor Jerry Viganksy said. "He never knew what hit him but Mr. Johnson knew exactly what he was doing … He saw him (Isom) lying in the road and he didn't do anything or go up to him. He showed no concern as to how he was doing. He denied that he was speeding or that he had been drinking."

For his part, Johnson spoke briefly before the sentencing. "I want to apologize to the court and to his family, I'm sorry beyond words," he said. "I want to tell them that I'm truly sorry. I understand and accept the fact that I have to pay for this. I know what happened that day paints a poor picture of me."

"We are here today because Mack Isom lost his life as a result of Mr. Johnson's actions," Judge Hosbein said. "There's no sentence I can impose that will make this right for his family. I understand the pain and immeasurable loss the family has endured and I am truly and deeply sorry."

Judge Hosbein called Isom a "pillar of our community". "We are not the same without him and the community has suffered an immense loss," he said. "I warn people every single day about drinking and driving and this is the result of drinking and driving … I'm sorry to both families for your loss."

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MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
2026 SOUTHWEST REGION HERBICIDE PROGRAM

The Michigan Department of Transportation hereby provides notice to the public, and property owners adjacent to state highways of the 2026 HerbicideApplication Program treatments for roadside rights-of way within Van Buren, Kalamazoo, Calhoun, Berrien, Cass, St. Joseph, and Branch Counties.

SCHEDULED DATES OF APPLICATION:
Applications will take place between April 1, 2026, and December 1, 2026.

HERBICIDES/LOCATIONS:
Non-Selective Applications: (guardrail, pavement/shoulder cracks and edges, barrier walls, concrete bridge slopes, invasive plants) ANY INDIVIDUAL OR COMBINATIONS OF THE HERBICIDES LISTED BELOW:
Roundup Pro Concentrate (Glyphosate), **Plateau** (Imazapic), **Milestone** (Aminopyralid), **Escort XP** (Metsulfuron Methyl), **Polaris** (Isopropylamine salt of Imazapyr), **Esplanade 200SC** (Indaziflam), **Method 240SL** (Aminocyclopyrachlor), **Telar XP** (Chlorsulfuron) **Aquamaster/Roundup Custom** (Glyphosate).

Selective Applications: (broadleaf weeds in turf areas, brush control, plant growth regulator, invasive plants) ANY INDIVIDUAL OR COMBINATIONS OF THE HERBICIDES LISTED BELOW:
Milestone (Aminopyralid), **Escort XP** (Metsulfuron Methyl), **Garlon 4 Ultra** (Triclopyr-2-butoxyethylester), **Plateau** (Imazapic), **Method 240SL** (Aminocyclopyrachlor), **Vastlan** (Triclopyr choline, acetic acid, choline salt), **TerraVue** (Aminopyralid, Florpyrauxifen-Benzyl), **HighNoon** (Aminopyralid, Florpyrauxifen-benzyl), **Garlon 3A** (Triclopyr).

METHOD OF APPLICATION:
Applications may be terrestrial, applied by vehicular-mounted fixed boom or hand spray gun equipment; or aerial drone applications. The herbicides will be tank-mixed or directly injected for each application.

RE-ENTRY RESTRICTIONS:
Do not enter treated areas until the spray has dried.

CONTACT:
All applications will be made by Certified Pesticide Applicators. For further information contact:

Rachael LeTourneau, Resource Analyst
Michigan Department of Transportation
1501 East Kilgore Road
Kalamazoo, MI 49001
269-303-2529

This notice is published per Regulation 637 Act No. 451, Public Acts of 1994, as amended.

OPINION

Boycotts might be key to changing government policies

By LISA SCHIRCH and DAVID CORTRIGHT
University of Notre Dame (The Conversation)

The organizers of the estimated 3,000 "No Kings" protests, rallies and other events planned for March 28, say they expect that the protests will be the largest such mass mobilization in U.S. history.

As scholars of peace studies and social movements, we investigate how ordinary people press their governments to change their policies.

An estimated 7 million Americans took part in the 2,100 "No Kings" protests on Oct. 18, breaking all previous records. But research that we and other scholars have conducted indicates that massive turnouts at protests may not be enough to achieve the goals of a protest movement, such as bringing about changes in government policies.

We believe that protest movements can be more effective when they place more emphasis on boycotts of corporations that support a government's agenda than on increasing the size and scope of these protests.

That's because history suggests that boycotts are uniquely suited to expand public participation and reach the scale necessary for political change. Boycotts attract first-time activists with simple "buy this, not that" instructions. They offer easy ways for people to feel heard with little investment of time, money or risk.

Rise of the 'No Kings' movement

The "No Kings" movement has been holding nonviolent protests across the U.S. since June 2025 to express mass opposition to the Trump administration's policies.

Its organizers include a range of nonprofits. They include those supporting civil rights, such as the American Civil Liberties Union; LGBTQ+ rights, like the Human Rights Campaign; progressive political groups, including Indivisible and MoveOn; and unions, such as the American Federation of Teachers.

The protests' organizers are harnessing growing public opposition to President Donald Trump's second administration. Gallup's final presidential poll, for example, conducted in December 2025, found that only about 1 in 3 Americans approved of his performance.

In March 2026, Fox News found that 6 in 10 Americans disapprove of Trump's immigration enforcement effort, and a CBS poll found that 6 in 10 oppose the U.S. war with Iran.

The "No Kings" movement from the start has objected to harsh federal immigration enforcement tactics, including the rapid growth in the number of immigrants being detained and deported. The March 28 protests will also make the widespread opposition to the costly Iran war more visible.

"No Kings" organizers cite other reasons for their protests, such as the White House's threats to intervene in elections, health care spending cuts and the cessation of many environmental protections.

Opposition to Trump is spreading

The "No Kings" protests have spread to more parts of the United States than ever before.

Protests have taken place in every state – in large cities like Dallas, Philadelphia and Phoenix, as well as thousands of smaller towns like Corydon, Indiana, and Hamilton, Montana. The protests even drew thousands of people in some GOP strongholds.

Researchers find that only a small part of the population needs to protest, boycott or strike to create strong pressure. If 3.5 percent of a population participates in nonviolent protests or boycotts, it can lead to policy changes.

In the United States, 3.5 percent of the population translates to nearly 12 million people. The "No Kings" movement would need to nearly double in size from its October 2025 levels to reach this threshold.

Boycotts could help reach this tipping point.

How boycotts work

Economic boycotts have a long history as a tool of collective protest as people withdraw their labor, purchases or cooperation to pressure powerful institutions.

Boycotts are a form of mass noncooperation that enables more people to resist without taking time off from work, engaging in confrontation or risking arrest. While demonstrations signal dissent, boycotts change incentives for business leaders. When boycotts cause companies to lose customers and profits slump, they can become unexpected allies in public opposition.

For example, after mass protests against federal immigration raids in Minneapolis, many of the biggest corporations operating in the state released an announcement that called on the government to de-escalate to reduce tensions in the area.

Public support for boycotts

Several consumer boycotts are underway in the U.S., with many taking aim at the Trump administration's policies.

Boycott leaders focus on major companies, such as Target, Walmart, Amazon and Home Depot, that have donated to the White House ballroom construction project and other causes Trump is personally spearheading,

People's Union USA, a movement seeking to leverage the power of U.S. consumers, organized what it called a nationwide "economic blackout" on Feb. 28. The organizers urged Americans to avoid spending any money for 24 hours to protest corporate influence over U.S. policies. It's unclear how effective that boycott was.

Where corporate boycotts have worked

In the 1980s, consumer boycotts of white-owned businesses in South Africa reduced profits and drew global attention to the government's support of apartheid, a discriminatory system that denied rights to the country's Black majority. As business suffered, white business leaders pressed for reforms, contributing to the end of apartheid and South Africa's multiracial elections in 1994.

In the U.S., different boycotts from both the right and the left have compelled Target to change its policies in recent years. Right-wing boycotts demanding the removal of LGBTQ+ Pride merchandise in 2023 caused Target to curtail its embrace of diversity practices.

After Trump's 2025 executive order banning diversity, equity and inclusion programs, Target faced left-wing boycotts for ending its Racial Equity Action and Change program. The company's sales fell and its stock declined by 33 percent in the first three quarters of 2025.

In March 2026, boycott leaders declared victory, saying that the boycotts led to Target's weak financial performance.

Following the growing wave of consumer boycotts, several media companies have also faced pressure from the public.

In September 2025, Disney suspended late night talk show host Jimmy Kimmel, whose program airs on ABC, after Kimmel suggested that right-wing influencer Charlie Kirk was killed by a fellow conservative. The comedian accused Trump supporters of using his death to "score political points." Disney owns ABC.

Kimmel's suspension triggered a rapid public backlash. Three million viewers called for a Disney boycott to disrupt the company's streaming revenue. Facing mounting risks to its reputation and bottom line, Disney reversed course and put Kimmel back on the air. In December 2025, it renewed his contract for the following year.

The episode illustrated how organized consumer pressure can counter attempts at political intimidation when boycott campaigns focus on a company's core economic interests.

Uncoordinated boycotts can fail

To be sure, many boycotts fail to meet their goals even when they do succeed at raising awareness.

Their economic impact depends on how many people take part, sustained participation, and clear demands. Boycotts lacking adequate coordination and clear aims are likely to fail, especially when different groups target different companies.

The No Kings protests will no doubt continue to reflect mounting public frustration. But to be effective at their goal of reining in many of Trump's policies and actions, we believe that this vast movement will likely require a larger, focused boycott that can hurt the revenue and reputation of companies that have financially backed the president or provided support for his policies.

Lisa Schirch is a professor of the Practice of Peace Studies at the University of Notre Dame. David Cortright is professor emeritus at the Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies, University of Notre Dame.

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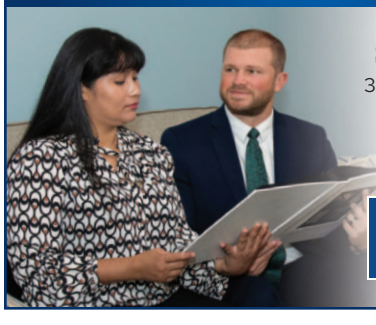
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DREW

From page A1

it's all cohesive in terms of what it says. I would title my pieces, and one woman at an opening said she loved that because it helped people reach another level of understanding. Now you see greeting cards and signs that say 'Have Grace' and 'Carry On.' People love to look at words. I was doing that, too, and that was a lot of fun."

Falling in love with art

Born and raised in metro Detroit, Drew said she owes her passion for creativity to her grandmother, who was a kindergarten teacher.

"She was my favorite of all time," she said. "She had a room upstairs in her house in Detroit loaded with paper, crayons and objects. She would let me go up there every time I came and I could do whatever I wanted. That was my first time falling in love with it. Plus, she gave me the freedom to do that."

That freedom encapsulated Drew's style, which often involves combining a variety of different media into one expressionist project that often features written words.

"People say when they see it, they know who did it," she said. "They talk about color, line and space. There was someone here who has a doctorate in art, and that's how she defined it: I know my space, I know my color and I know my subject. There is nothing else like it."

Drew graduated from the University of Michigan in 1968 and met her husband there, who was from Niles. Drew then became the first woman to pursue a master's degree in arts at the University of Notre Dame.

"[Dr. Thomas Fern] was the chairman," she said. "It was really interesting because they didn't really want to accept me at all. He said to me 'You might have gotten away with this baloney at Michigan because at Michigan, it was all free spirit and anything goes. You can't do that here anymore, so you have to show me that you know the basics. You have to show me that you can draw, so I want you to sit in front of a mirror for six months and draw yourself. If you can show me that you can really draw, then we'll get together a little bit.' I got so sick of drawing myself, and people think that my eyes and my face sometimes mirror that – probably so, because I was doing it all the time."

According to Drew, her first job was the curator of the Niles History Museum. Drew completed two semesters at Notre Dame before deciding to step away due to motherhood.

"I thought I would go back, and it made me sad that I didn't, but the one professor that I had was just a gem," she said. "He said to me, 'All you have to do is keep working. Just do your work, and when you do your work, you don't need any more of this. That said to me, 'I'm going to be able to do this by myself.' It was a struggle, but it was a happy struggle that they would let me in and I could draw for Dr. Fern."

'Happy and inspired'

Raising children was one of the driving forces behind her creative expressions. Everyday items throughout her home – clothes, furniture, lamp shades and more – became her canvas. Many of her self-published books centered around motherhood. She went on to meet the editor of the Chicago Tribune and produced a syndicated cartoon "A Fine Line" for the paper that lasted approximately five years.

Her artistic talents allowed her to open her clothing store, Real Nancy Drew, in locations around the country and took her to places she never thought possible. She created a national advertisement campaign for L'eggs that was published in Vogue, Elle and People magazines in the late '90s.

Drew estimates she has sold between two and three million pieces of her work. When asked what piece or pieces were her favorite, she said the drawings and paintings her children have done are at the top of the list. "They are far better than what I could ever do, in my opinion," she said. "Those are my favorite things."

According to Drew, her children are some of her biggest fans.

"Some of the older ones think I'm famous, and I think that's very funny," she said. "I don't really feel that way. They are all happy to be here, and they go shopping in my studio all the time. They take things home and make them their own. Not one of them looks at me like, 'What is the matter with you?'"

When asked what advice she would give to aspiring creatives, Drew said she would tell them that they have talents unique to them and to cultivate those talents.

"For instance, when women used to bake bread and take care of their family, those were art forms. Of course, they didn't get a lot of credit, and that's a hard pill to swallow," she said. "I just think: be happy with what gifts you have and play with them every day. Don't be hard on yourself, and don't compare yourself to other people that you think are just so talented, because you've all got it. That's what I think."

Drew looks forward to opening up her home to the community.

"They don't have to buy anything. That would be swell, but I just really want them to be happy and inspired."

BIG FISH

From page A1

diverse age range, the youngest actor being 9 years old.

"We realized that we had enough people with the right amount of talent to double cast those parts in line with the way they did it in the film. That added to the vision I had for being able to flip-flop back and forth between fantasy and reality," she said.

When rehearsals began in January, the next major order of business was helping the cast get their movements and musical parts down, with help from choreographer Paige Mulick.

"What's unique about a musical is, you're not just focusing on the acting and stage part of it, but you've got to take time for teaching the actors how to sing," Sain said. "So you also have the vocal and choreography rehearsals."

LMC's production will feature large-scale LED video wall panels and digital scenery, helping bring to life the fantastic tales of giants, witches and mystical caves that Edward Bloom tells his son in an attempt to make up for his frequent absences from home.

"It's going to allow us to take these larger-than-life stories, put them together, and tell them in as much of a cinematic way as possible on the stage. We're doing our best to bring that fantasy and that vision and imagination to life, for sure," Sain said.

LMC received an $11,800 grant from the Berrien County Community Foundation and Ann Marie Marlow to fund the technology. According to a news release from the college, LMC is working with a local film production company, Little Red Fern, led by Ryan Cheevers, for the show.

Don Campbell / PMG

The cast of "Big Fish" runs through the show during rehearsal.

Additional reinforcement comes from LMC's stage production partner, TPC Technologies Inc., of Niles, and technical director Matt "Dolphy" Clark, whose team trained students on how to program and run the panels. This weekend's production marks the first time in the department's history where technology of this scale has been used.

There will also be a live orchestra led by Rebecca Derbas-Selvidge, the show's music director, bringing the cast and production crew to roughly 70 people, all of whom faced the additional challenge of losing "quite a few days" due to weather conditions, Sain said.

That said, everyone worked through those issues, which, in Sain's experience, can differ from show to show.

"This winter was tricky. But, we anticipated that, and tried to pad the rehearsal schedule with a few extra days, just in case. It's theater for you – you put (a show) on for one weekend, then the dust settles, and you're like, 'Did that just happen?'" Sain said, laughing. "It's over before you know it."

Tickets are available for purchase at www.TheMendelCenter.com/events.

For more information, call 269-927-8700 or email boxoffice@lakemichigancollege.edu.

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Sports

Area hoopers earn all-conference honors
Page B2

Got results?
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Three Rivers' Taylor signs with SMC cross country

SUBMITTED

TAYLOR

DOWAGIAC — Three Rivers' Dontrel Taylor has signed his NJCAA Letter of Intent to run cross country for Head Coach Zac Sartori and the Roadrunners starting in Fall 2026. He will also compete in track and field for SMC.

"Kind, Strong, Composed, Resilient: all words that describe Dontrel Taylor and the amazing young man that he has become," said Three Rivers Coach Jason Muckel. "It has been an absolute honor to have Dontrel as part of my program for the past four years and I have the utmost confidence that whatever he does in life, he will thrive beyond measure and impact the lives of everyone he comes in contact with."

Taylor joins Trent Hansen of Plainwell in the 2026 SMC Men's Cross Country recruiting class.

"As an athlete, Dontrel has learned to overcome challenges both within and beyond his sport, fueling his growth and success," Sartori said. "I have been watching him these past few years and I am excited to see what he can do for the SMC Roadrunners. He has overcome so many obstacles and challenges and I am certain he will rise to those before him in the coming years."

In Fall 2025, the Roadrunners finished the season ranked 16th in the country after competing in the NJCAA National Championships in unseasonably cold and snowy conditions at the Lakeside Golf Course in Fort Dodge, Iowa. Freshman Owen Saylor, a Dowagiac grad, became SMC's 34th running All-American – and 69th overall – by finishing in the top 25 in that race.

'It's a game-changer'

Expanded training facility bolsters the golf program at Cassopolis

By MAXWELL HARDEN
max.harden@leaderpub.com

Photos courtesy of Joseph Westrate

Members of the Cassopolis golf program use the training facility's two simulation bays during a recent session.

CASSOPOLIS — One of southwest Michigan's premiere golf programs is celebrating the completion of a major redevelopment project it believes will help take it to the next level and grow the game.

The Cassopolis golf program recently gave the board of education a tour of its expanded training facility. Located on campus next to the boys locker room, the facility now features two simulation bays and an indoor "short game" room where golfers can practice putting. The golf simulators allow the team to practice, play local courses and analyze their swing year-round.

"Before we only had one central bay and then a couple small little bays, but it wasn't very efficient," said Head Coach Joseph Westrate. "Since the program has been continuously growing, we decided to modify it. We're focusing on distances and specific targets, which is key—it can be a numbers game. The players need to know how far they are hitting their irons, how far they are hitting their drivers or their hybrids and woods and that's why we've been pounding golf balls all winter."

"It's definitely helped with putting a specific target on something and hitting it and it has also helped a lott in the short game," said Ranger golfer Jayden Pflug. "It's great because you can even play courses if you don't want to do a challenge. We're getting the courses that we play for regionals or invitationals, so we can practice for those already."

Coaches and players appreciate having a space to get swings in during the offseason and the unpredictability of spring weather.

"I think it's huge for us to have something like this in Michigan, where the weather is so bipolar," said Ranger golfer William Westrate. "You don't know if you're going to be outside or not, but we can come in here any day and just hit balls. Now that we have the putting green, we can work on our short game. That's really big because I struggled a lot with putting last year, so I'm going to be able to get a lot of practice."

See FACILITY, page B2

The Cassopolis golf program's new "short game" room allows golfers to practice their putting.

Niles baseball sweeps Paw Paw

PMG STAFF

NILES — The Niles baseball team rallied from a 5-4 deficit in the first game against Paw Paw to score a 6-5 victory over the Red Wolves on Tuesday. The Vikings defeated the Paw Paw 10-7 in game two to earn the sweep. The second game began on Tuesday but finished Wednesday in Paw Paw due to darkness.

In game one, a Bryce Zache double scored two runs in the top of the seventh inning to secure the win for the Vikings. Jaxen Racht struck out seven batters and walked four and allowed one hit and five runs – four earned – in 4.33 innings. In relief, Ryne Brown struck out two batters and gave up two hits in two scoreless innings for Niles (5-0). Brenden Olsen had one home run to left field in the first inning and Brody Lace and Tanner Rachels each collected one hit for Niles, with Lace adding two stolen bases.

Paw Paw pitcher Remi Dempsey struck out six and gave up one hit and three runs – two earned – in four innings.

In the second game, Lace led the Vikings with three hits in three at-bats – a double in the second inning, a single in the third inning and a single in the fifth inning. Tied 2-2 in the second inning, an Olsen single down the right field line, a Lace double to center field and a Zache walk each scored one run for the Vikings, who added one run in the third after Lace singled to center field.

Collin Gerdes picked up the win on the mound for the Vikings, striking out five batters while surrendering two hits and two runs – one earned – over three innings. In relief, Brady Fletcher struck out two and allowed eight hits and five runs – three earned – in four innings. Reliever Landen Geddes took the loss for Paw Paw.

Olsen had five hits in five at-bats as the Vikings tallied 14 hits and 11 stolen bases in the win.

COLLEGE FOOTBALL

Early might be late on Whittingham's clock at U-M

By ANGELIQUE S. CHENGELIS
The Detroit News (TNS)

ANN ARBOR — On American military bases, Reveille, a bugle call, is played over loudspeakers in the early morning to signal the start of the day.

In the Michigan football building these days, under new head coach Kyle Whittingham, when meetings begin, an air horn sounds.

"It means we have already started our meetings," safety Rod Moore, a graduate student, said this week. "The past two years, we would start the meeting at 2:30. Now we start meetings at 2:25, but it's really a 2:30 meeting starting five minutes early."

This is reminiscent of former Michigan head coach Lloyd Carr (1995-2007), who borrowed from legendary Green Bay Packers coach Vince Lombardi and would tell his players, "If you are five minutes early, you are already 10 minutes late."

This is all about discipline and setting a tone for a program. Whittingham was hired last December, 16 days after Sherrone Moore was fired for having an inappropriate relationship with his executive assistant. Moore was head coach for two seasons, and a handful of players who spoke with reporters Wednesday described the Whittingham Era as focused on punctuality and accountability, responsibility and reliability.

"There's a lot more accountability," Moore said. "The little things that make a team great. Not just the big broad things that everyone else sees."

Players can no longer nonchalantly show up late for meetings.

See WHITTINGHAM, page B2

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HIGH SCHOOL SCOREBOARD

PMG STAFF

BASEBALL

March 20 results
First game

NILES 9, LAKESHORE 2

Niles	**103**	**120**	**2**	**—**	**9**	**12**	**1**
Lakeshore	**000**	**101**	**0**	**—**	**2**	**6**	**1**

WP – B. Fletcher 6k. LP – M. Bell.
Top hitters – Niles: B. Olsen 3 1b; B. Lace 1b, 2b, 3 RBI; A. Kirtdoll 2 1b, RBI; R. Brown 3b, 2 RBI; J. Racht 2 1b, RBI. Lakeshore: R. Danapilis 2b; L. Arnt 2 1b, RBI.

SECOND GAME

NILES 16, LAKESHORE 9

Niles	**230**	**040**	**7**	**—**	**16**	**19**	**4**
Lakeshore	**000**	**621**	**0**	**—**	**9**	**8**	**2**

WP – R. Brown. LP – A. Smit.
Top hitters – Niles: B. Olsen 3 1b, HR, 4 RBI; B. Lace 4 1b; A. Kirtdoll 2 1b, 3 RBI; R. Brown 2 1b, 2 2b, 3 RBI; J. Miller 1b, HR, 3 RBI. Lakeshore: K. Griffiths HR, 4 RBI; Q. Carmody 2b, HR, 2 RBI; A. Smit 2b; I. Timmons 2b; W. Chrispell 1b, 2 RBI.

SOFTBALL

First game

BUCHANAN 15, STURGIS 0

Sturgis	**000**	**0**	**—**	**0**	**1**	**3**
Buchanan	**842**	**1**	**—**	**15**	**15**	**0**

WP – H. Legault 5k. LP – G. Pagels.
Top hitters – Buchanan: M. Ely 2b, RBI; A. Berry 2 1b, 2 RBI; L. Atkinson 2 1b, RBI; K. Singleton 1b, 2b, RBI; T. Heller 2 1b, 2b, 2 RBI; H. Legault 3 1b, 3 RBI.

Second game

BUCHANAN 19, STURGIS 4

Sturgis	**004**	**—**	**4**	**2**	**2**
Buchanan	**3(12)4**	**—**	**19**	**15**	**0**

WP – A. Villaire 4k. LP – B. Shank.
Top hitters – Buchanan: M. Ely 2 1b, RBI; R. Berry 2 1b, 3 RBI; A. Berry 2b, 3b, 5 RBI; L. Atkinson 1b, 2b; K. Singleton 2 1b, RBI; T. Heller 1b, 3b, RBI; A. Villaire 1b, 3b, 2 RBI; T. Carlin 2b, RBI.

GIRLS SOCCER

Monday's results

MICHIGAN LUTHERAN 5, BRANDYWINE 2

Goals — ML: Aubrey Barnes 2, Serena Yim 2, Evangeline Liss.
Assists – ML: Liss.
Saves – Mya Lemke (ML) 13.
Watervliet 1, Buchanan 0
Goal – Katelyn Brown.
Assists – Natalaya Desjardin.
Halftime – Tied 0-0.

NILES 5, BERRIEN SPRINGS 0

Goals — Elynne Hoyt 2, Nyla Hover 2, Maria Villafana.
Assists – Ellie Bradley, Analia Olivares.
Shots on goal – Niles 19, Berrien Springs 1.
Saves – BSp: Allie Gallardo 11, Avery Purvis 3.
Halftime – Niles 2-0.

TRACK

March 19 results

GVSU LAKER CHALLENGE

Girls Big Schools
Team scores – 1. Holland West Ottawa 50, 2. Rockford 47.5, 3. Zeeland East 39, 4. Grand Haven 33, 5. Coopersville 29, 6. (tie) Hastings 25, Holland Christian 25, 8. St. Joseph 20, 9. Otsego 17, 10. Kal. Central 14, 11. (tie) Wyoming 13, Muskegon Reeths-Puffer 13, 13. BC Lakeview 12, 14. Muskegon Mona Shores 10, 15. Jenison 9, 16. (tie) Wyoming Godwin Heights 8, Holt 8, Edwardsburg 8, Allegan 8, 20. (tie) Spring Lake 7, Hudsonville 7, 22. Middleville Thornapple Kellogg 6, 23. Zeeland West 5, 24. Niles 4, 25. (tie) Portland 3, Mount Pleasant 3, 27. (tie) GR Forest Hills Northern 2, Allendale 2, 29. Dowagiac 1.5.

Top local finishers
400 – 5. Alani Scott (Niles) 1:00.04; high jump – 2. Sarah Pippin (Edw) 5-2, 7. Nadia Poorman (Dow) 4-10.

Tuesday's results

PAW PAW 55, OTSEGO 47, NILES 40

100 — Benn Bruckner (N) 11.02; 200 – Bruckner (N) 22.41; 400 – Jack Cook (O) 51.64; 800 – Ty Oaks (O) 2:07.11; 1600 – John Brickley (N) 4:36.81; 3200 – Brickley (N) 10:03.49; 110 hurdles – Ryan Lasinski (PP) 15.62; 300 hurdles – Lasinski (PP) 43.55; 400 relay – Niles (Vaughn Asmus, Gunner Sherer, Bruckner, Stephen Applewhite) 44.65; 800 relay – Niles (Asmus, Sherer, Lucas Debortoli, Jaleel Smith) 1:36.02; 1600 relay – Otsego 3:37.83; 3200 relay – Otsego 8:31.16; shot put – Alex Robbins (O) 49-1; discus – Robbins (O) 169-3; high jump – Silas Penning (PP) 6-2; long jump – Bruckner (N) 19-8.

EDWARDSBURG 75, PLAINWELL 62

100 — Mobius Stubblefield (E) 11.55; 200 – Trent Hansen (P) 23.37; 400 – Stubblefield (E) 51.75; 800 – Ethan Ferguson (E) 2:03.36; 1600 – George Scupham (E) 4:47.02; 3200 – Ferguson (E) 10:40.37; 110 hurdles – Lyle Schaible (E) 17.04; 300 hurdles – Schaible (E) 45.83; 400 relay – Plainwell 46.85; 800 relay – Plainwell 1:34.33; 1600 relay – Plainwell 3:42.77; 3200 relay – Edwardsburg (Jaden Gregory, Ferguson, Riley Szalai, Scupham) 8:46.59; shot put – Sawyer Lilly (P) 46-10; discus – Lilly (P) 144-3; high jump – Zachary Overmyer (E) 6-4; pole vault – Loehn Luckett (P) 11-0; long jump – Peter Szlanfucht (E) 19-6.

Girls

OTSEGO 90, PAW PAW 53, NILES 21

100 — Taylor Thorpe (PP) 12.72; 200 – Thorpe (PP) 26.04; 400 – Kyla Haak (O) 1:04.94; 800 – Adelyn Verhage (O) 2:27.62; 1600 – Verhage (O) 5:26.61; 3200 – Verhage (O) 11:51.46; 100 hurdles – Olivia Klimp (O) 17.93; 300 hurdles – Klimp 50.04; 400 relay – Niles (Alissa Conn, Katie Walsh, Kathrin Black, Alani Scott) 53.65; 800 relay – Paw Paw 1:55.19; 1600 relay – Otsego 4:24.25; 3200 relay – Otsego 10:39.41; shot put – Audrey Holmes (O) 34-11; discus – Madden Fitzpatrick 102-9; high jump – Mecenzie Allen 5-0; Ollivia Klimp 14-8.

PLAINWELL 80, EDWARDSBURG 56

100 — Nyra Cross (P) 13.32; 200 – Sylar Luckett (P) 28.70; 400 – Alayna Ranney (P) 1:06.10; 800 – Grace Leman(E) 2:36.63; 1600 – Mai Nguyen (P) 5:45.73; 3200 – Grace Leman (E) 11:56.84; 100 hurdles – Sarina Mora (E) 17.27; 300 hurdles – Siena Kaylor (E) 53.27; 400 relay – Pllainwell 52.22; 800 relay – Plainwell 1:50.82; 1600 relay – Edwardsburg (Piper Bryant, Caliana Manfred, Layla Gableman, Kennedy Goorhouse) 4:39.40; 3200 relay – Edwardsburg (Brynlee Landis, Gableman, Giselle Babcock, Leman) 11:01.46; shot put – Sawyer Johnson (P) 20-11; discus – Hayden Steele (P) 52-3; high jump – Sarah Pippin (E) 5-5; pole vault – Abbigail Peat (E) 8-6; long jump – Mora (E) 15-3.

Nick Shelton / For Leader Publications

Lily Gill was one of five Brandywine Bobcats named to All-Lakeland Conference teams.

Bobcats dominate All-Lakeland teams

PMG STAFF

Brandywine dominated the All-Lakeland Conference girls basketball squad.

The conference, district and regional champion Bobcats landed four players on the first team while Berrien Springs and Buchanan each had two and Dowagiac one. Berrien Springs had three players named Honorable Mention while Dowagiac and Buchanan had two and Brandywine one.

First team

MacKenna Price, Brandywine; Zaya Price, Brandywine; Kairleigh Byrd, Brandywine; Lilly Gill, Brandywine; Zion Ellis, Berrien Springs; Kathryn Bergan, Berrien Springs; Marlie Carpenter, Dowagiac; Gabby Carson, Buchanan; Reese Berry, Buchanan

Honorable mention

Brooke Brumitt, Brandywine; Adeline Weber, Berrien Springs; Brianna Wolff, Berrien Springs; Dylan Rospierski, Berrien Springs; Bree Campbell, Dowagiac; Claire Hess, Dowagiac; Aspen Berry, Buchanan; Justyce Cashier, Buchanan

Buchanan's McBeth, trio from Brandywine named First Team All-Lakeland

PMG STAFF

The Brandywine boys basketball team was well-represented with Lakeland Conference boys basketball honors.

The Bobcats shared the conference title with the Shamrocks and had three players selected to the first team. Senior Nylen Goins was the top vote-getter among all players in the conference, and was joined on the first team by senior Ryder Richard and junior Will Hubbard.

Brandywine finished with a 20-6 overall record, won a district championship and reached the regional finals.

Berrien Springs senior Brady Blasko and freshman Kellen Blasko were both named first-team all-conference, and their father, Craig Blasko, was the Lakeland Coach of the Year.

Junior Darrin O'Dell was also a first-team selection for the Shamrocks, and junior Louis Rome was the top vote-getter among honorable mention picks. Berrien Springs finished as Lakeland co-champions with a 5-1 conference record.

Buchanan senior Liam McBeth was also a first-team selection.

Nick Shelton / For Leader Publications

Brandywine's Nylen Goins broke Leonard Drake's career-scoring record of 1,328 points set back in 1973.

Edwardsburg, Niles duos are named All-Wolverine

PMG STAFF

A pair of Eddies and Vikings earned spots on All-Wolverine Conference teams.

Edwardsburg's Shelby Laubach and Niles' Jessie Thornton were named to the All-Wolverine First Team. Edwardsburg's Kya Shier and Niles' Elynne Hoyt were named All-Wolverine Honorable Mention.

First Team

Shelby Laubach, Edwardsburg; Jessie Thornton, Niles; Mya Engbers, Otsego; Brooke Smalldon, Otsego; Kinder Smith, Sturgis; Dani Glass, Three Rivers

Second Team

Madden Fitzpatrick, Otsego; Anna Overway, Plainwell; Kaylee VanAtter, Plainwell; Alyssa Weldon, Plainwell; Sydney Bir, Sturgis; Cora Phillips, Sturgis

Honorable Mention

Kya Shier, Edwardsburg; Elynne Holt, Niles; Audrey Lingbeek, Otsego; Mecenzie Allen, Paw Paw; Tessie Kiel, Plainwell

Photo courtesy of Jeff Douglas

Shelby Laubach led the Eddies in scoring as a junior.

Niles, Edwardsburg players named All-Wolverine

PMG STAFF

The Niles and Edwardsburg boys basketball teams were well-represented on the Wolverine Conference's All-Wolverine teams. Four Vikings and three Eddies were named to All-Wolverine teams, which recognize the conference's best players.

First Team

Blaise Crist, Edwardsburg; Brayden Favors, Niles; Brenden Olsen, Niles; Caden Bowen, Paw Paw; Truman Brennan, Paw Paw; Chib Amaezechi, Plainwell

Second Team

Reed Gates, Edwardsburg; Donovyn Williams, Niles; Leeland Longcore, Otsego; Kaelin Tate, Paw Paw; Gavin Lewis, Sturgis; Mitchell Beyer, Vicksburg

Honorable Mention

Michael Wright, Edwardsburg; Derrick Hill, Niles; Wyatt Dennis, Otsego; Elias Sonnenberg, Paw Paw; Drew Rayman, Plainwell

Jeff Douglas / For Leader Publications

Brayden Favors was named First Team All-Wolverine.

FACILITY

From page B1

"Michigan is a very unpredictable state for weather, so it is huge to have a golf facility with a short game room," added Ranger golfer Jaii Vanhphoumy. "We are fortunate enough to have two simulator bays where people can practice challenges or specific courses. My teammates can practice at a regional course or somewhere we are going to play soon."

Growing the game

Coach Westrate said that the facility has helped grow the boys program, which has grown to 18 boys, as well as the girls program. He and assistant coach Brad Grover started the girls program five years ago and have started a middle school program to grow the game locally.

"The kids love it," he said. "Both programs are growing. We didn't have the girls program before. Unfortunately, we had to get rid of girls soccer, but there wasn't much participation. We started girls golf and we play in one of the best leagues in the state, the KVA league with Kalamazoo Christian, Hackett, South Haven, Saugatuck, Schoolcraft and Dowagiac. It's a good league. And then we have started a middle school program because of what we have here. We can accommodate three or four kids in here and then four or five hitting balls there. It's just more efficient and productive.

"It's a game changer to just be able to hit all year round."

For Grover, watching the program grow over the years has been a joy. He said the program has also installed a practice bunker out at the driving range.

"Getting the second simulator was huge because it increased our capacity," he said. "Our program is now the biggest it has been in the last five years. We never had the capacity to bring middle schoolers in during the wintertime, but now that program is coming in and has 15 students, which is the highest it's ever been. Even if the numbers drop off, if we can get some of those kids to appreciate the game and want to play on their own, that's what it's all about. It's growing the program by leaps and bounds. Five or six years ago, this was a coed boys and girls golf program."

Ready for spring

The Rangers have won five straight conference titles and placed ninth overall last season in the Division 3 State Tournament; they aim to improve on that placement this season. According to the players, the expanded facility has paid dividends leading into the season.

"I am super prepared for this season," Vanhphoumy said. "Being able to have a club in your hand throughout the winter and the off-season is vital. You have to practice how you play. If you are practicing during the off-season, when you get ready to compete, it feels just like practice. When you go out there, you are just playing the course and not even worried about your score. It comes down to your swing and fundamentals."

"I feel like I'm definitely way more prepared," added Jayden Pflug. "I have one year under my belt for golf, and it's a lot easier to be ready for a match."

Community support

Coach Westrate said the facility would not be possible without the support from the district and the community, who have played pivotal roles in helping to make the golf program one of southwest Michigan's best.

"I'm really excited about it," he said. "I got to thank our school board, my athletic director [Lindsay Gorham-Pflug], the athletic boosters, parents that have kids in the program and also alumni that have donated their time and funds to be able to support our development here and to really make our rooms serious. There are very few high schools that have a facility like this. Normally you have to go to a local country club or something like that to be able to find something similar, so I'm just excited about it."

The players appreciate the community investing in them and look forward to returning the favor in the form of success on the golf course this spring.

"I think it's great that the community has put in so much for us," William Westrate said. "I think it's time for us to bring something back – bring some hardware for them. All the hard work they've done for us is going to pay off. It also brings more kids into the game; they see something like this, they like it, they join the team and they get to practice in it, too."

"Knowing you have the support of your community and your hometown behind you means a lot," Vanhphoumy said. "It gives you that extra motivation and drive to push yourself, earn your place and accomplish your goals."

WHITTINGHAM

From page B1

"You need to be 10 minutes early to everything," running back Jordan Marshall said. "Guys would roll in whenever they really wanted to. And (this new approach is) something that I really like."

Players have to attend class. If not, they won't practice, Marshall said. As he sees it, it's about doing things the right way, because that pays dividends in terms of team bonding and, ultimately, on-field performance. He spoke about the team being in "alignment."

"That's something that needs to be done, so that we're all on the same page, and everybody trusts each other," Marshall said, referring to the players having to attend classes. "Because if I can trust you to go to class, if I can trust you to do things maybe you don't want to do, then I can trust you on the field when it's the fourth quarter and we have one minute left in the game."

Whittingham has overhauled the staff, including in the weight room. The players worked all winter with Doug Elisaia, director of sports performance at Michigan, and defensive lineman Trey Pierce said how the team conditions is very different. They have more days off from the weight room, but they have more lifts.

"A lot more morning workouts," Pierce said. "It introduces that factor of toughness, like we've been through this at 6 a.m., 6:15 a.m. all these days in the grind together. It improves team bonding and puts you in the headspace of we've done harder stuff than this and nothing can break us."

Rod Moore said that overall, things are "more strict" under Whittingham, and training with Elisaia has been a "night and day" difference than the last two years.

"We feel a lot stronger, a lot more progress," Moore said.

Practices are being run differently, as well. They last two hours and the time is used efficiently. Marshall said they are up-tempo and high paced.

"We're working," Marshall said. "I don't stop moving at practice. We're always doing something, and that's not only going to help with us competing with teams, but our conditioning. Practicing that fast for two hours, we're not out there just standing around. We're out there moving 24/7, and that's going to put us in the position to be conditioned when we're in the fourth quarter, in the third quarter, and the other team's tired. We've done all these gassers at the end of practice to put us in the position to be ready to go and ready to strike."

BASEBALL

Have Tigers ever had a hitting prospect as hyped as McGonigle?

By TONY PAUL
The Detroit News (TNS)

TNS / Robin Buckson, The Detroit News

Tigers prospect Kevin McGonigle watches the ball and then goes home to score on a throwing error by Yankees catcher Ali Sanchez in the first inning at George M. Steinbrenner Field in an exhibition in Tampa, Fla., on Feb. 21/

There has rarely been this kind of hype about a Tigers position-player prospect. Then again, there's rarely been a Tigers position-player prospect ranked as high as Kevin McGonigle – and never since at least 1990.

McGonigle, the consensus No. 2 prospect in baseball, officially made the Tigers' Opening Day roster, it was announced Tuesday, ahead of the season opener Thursday in San Diego.

And the Tigers certainly recognized the significance of the moment, announcing McGonigle's addition to the roster with a social-media post that read, "It's his time." Later in the day Tuesday, the team also sent out an email to season-ticket holders announcing the move, complete with a link to buy tickets, of course.

The News, via the archives of Baseball-Reference.com, went back to the 1990 season to see how many Tigers position-player prospects have been ranked in the top 100 by at least one of the top national publications. McGonigle, at No. 2, is the highest-ranked Tiger since at least 1990.

Turns out, there actually have been far more than we remembered – and a whole lot of blasts from the past.

Tigers' top-100 hitting prospects, since the start of the 1990 season

- Travis Fryman: No. 39, pre-1990
- Rico Brogna: No. 35, pre-1991
- Danny Bautista: No. 90, pre-1994
- Tony Clark: No. 86, pre-1995
- Juan Encarnacion: No. 15, pre-1998
- Gabe Kapler: No. 34, pre-1999
- Eric Munson: No. 23, pre-2000
- Ramon Santiago: No. 92, pre-2000
- Brandon Inge: No. 67, pre-2001
- Omar Infante: No. 95, pre-2002
- Brent Clevlen: No. 98, pre-2004
- Curtis Granderson: No. 57, pre-2005
- Cameron Maybin: No. 6, pre-2007
- Scott Sizemore: No. 57, pre-2010
- Avisail Garcia: No. 74, pre-2013
- Nick Castellanos: No. 21, pre-2013
- Steven Moya: No. 100, pre-2015
- Derek Hill: No. 98, pre-2015
- Spencer Torkelson: No. 5, pre-2021 and 2022
- Riley Greene: No. 4, pre-2022
- Colt Keith: No. 28, pre-2024
- Jace Jung: No. 81, pre-2024
- Kevin McGonigle: No. 2, pre-2026

McGonigle, 21, was the No. 37 overall pick in the 2023 Major League Baseball Draft, out of high school in Pennsylvania. Despite injuries early in his pro career, he has skyrocketed up the Tigers' farm system.

In 2025, McGonigle mostly split the season between High-A West Michigan and Double-A Erie, then had a successful stint in the Arizona Fall League. He has never played a game at Triple-A Toledo. McGonigle had a .991 OPS in the minors last season, and then a 1.210 OPS in the Arizona Fall League, as he jumped past his good friend Max Clark, the No. 3 overall pick in 2023, in the prospect pecking order. Baseball America ranks Clark sixth-best entering 2026; Clark will start the season at Toledo.

This spring, McGonigle, who figures to play mostly shortstop with the Tigers (but he also can play second base and third base), had an .888 OPS in 20 games, with two home runs and six RBIs.

With McGonigle, the betting favorite to win rookie of the year in the American League, the Tigers now will have three former top-five position-player prospects on their roster (according to Baseball America), along with Riley Greene, who was ranked No. 4 entering 2022, and Spencer Torkelson, who was ranked No. 5 entering both the 2021 and 2021 seasons. Colt Keith was No. 28, entering 2024.

How to subscribe to Tigers games on streaming services

Detroit Tigers games will be streamed during the 2026 season with a new arrangement between the team and MLB Media.

The new channel is called Detroit SportsNet, and subscriptions are available for $189.99 for the year or $19.99 a month at tigers.com/DetroitSportsNet.

For fans who prefer cable, Detroit SportsNet will be available on Comcast/Xfinity, Charter/Spectrum, and DirecTV. To find the specific channel for the cable provider in your area, go to tigers.com/watch.

– The Detroit News (TNS)

Charlie Riedel / AP

Chicago Cubs' Pete Crow-Armstrong bats during the fifth inning of a spring training baseball game against the Kansas City Royals on Feb. 23 in Surprise, Ariz.

Crow-Armstrong agrees to $115M, six-year contract with the Cubs

By JAY COHEN
AP Baseball Writer

CHICAGO — Pete Crow-Armstrong has agreed to a $115 million, six-year contract with the Chicago Cubs, according to a person familiar with the deal, establishing the All-Star center fielder as one of the franchise's core players.

The person spoke to The Associated Press on Tuesday on condition of anonymity because the agreement had not been announced.

Crow-Armstrong had agreed to a one-year contract for 2026 calling for $894,000 while in the major leagues and $385,500 while in the minors.

His new agreement includes a $5 million signing bonus payable by May 15 and salaries of $10 million each in 2027, '28 and '29, $20 million in 2030 and $30 million apiece in 2031 and '32.

Crow-Armstrong's 2031 salary would increase by $2 million for each MVP award from 2027-30, $1 million for each second- or third-place finish, $750,000 for fourth or fifth and $500,000 for sixth through 10th. His 2032 salary would increase by the same amounts based on MVP voting for 2027-31.

In addition, he would get a $1 million assignment bonus each time he is traded.

Crow-Armstrong has one year, 170 days of major league service and would have been arbitration-eligible next winter as a so-called Super 2. He gets $55 million for his four arbitration-eligible years and $60 million for what would have been his first two years of free-agent eligibility.

His contract is the biggest with no club options for a player with five years of club financial control left at the time of signing.

Crow-Armstrong, who turns 24 on Wednesday, is coming off a breakout performance. He hit .247 with 31 homers, 95 RBIs and 35 steals last season, helping the Cubs earn an NL wild card for the team's first playoff appearance since 2020.

Crow-Armstrong also covers a ton of ground in the outfield for one of baseball's best defensive teams. The Southern California native won his first Gold Glove last year.

Crow-Armstrong was selected by the New York Mets in the first round of the 2020 amateur draft. He was traded to the Cubs in the Javier Báez deal in July 2021.

He made his major league debut in 2023, going 0 for 14 in 13 games. He had a rough June in his second season before finding his form. He batted .289 with seven homers and 30 RBIs in his last 57 games in 2024.

Crow-Armstrong put together a fast start last year, hearing chants of "M-V-P!" at Wrigley Field while hitting .272 with 21 homers and 61 RBIs in his first 80 games. But he faded down the stretch, batting just .192 and striking out 33 times in his last 35 games in the regular season.

Making his first appearance in the playoffs, he hit .185 (5 for 27) in eight games as the Cubs advanced to the second round before they were eliminated by the Milwaukee Brewers in an NL Division Series.

"I think it's a season that you would kind of expect from Pete. That's Pete," manager Craig Counsell said during the winter meetings in December. "It's like we saw some incredible things. We saw some stretches where he was an out at the plate. I think his defense was incredibly consistent and brilliant throughout the season.

"And I think really the goal is to just – it's just to keep improving. ... That's what I'd want from Pete. And as long as that quest never burns out and you keep that alive, he's going to get to better places and great places."

Crow-Armstrong's preparation for this season including playing for the U.S. during the World Baseball Classic. He hit .100 (2 for 20) in eight spring training games with the Cubs.

Report: Hoerner agrees to six-year deal with Cubs

By JAY COHEN
AP Baseball Writer

Ross D. Franklin / AP

Chicago Cubs' Nico Hoerner celebrates his run scored against the Arizona Diamondbacks during the first inning of a spring training baseball game on March 5 in Mesa, Ariz.

CHICAGO — Cubs second baseman Nico Hoerner has agreed to a six-year contract, according to a person familiar with the deal, marking another major commitment for the franchise.

The person spoke to the AP on Thursday on condition of anonymity because the agreement was pending a physical.

The long-term contract for Hoerner comes after All-Star center fielder Pete Crow-Armstrong agreed to a $115 million, six-year deal. The Cubs announced Crow-Armstrong's contract after Thursday's 10-4 loss to Washington on opening day.

The 28-year-old Hoerner was selected in the first round of the 2018 amateur draft out of Stanford University. He is at the beginning of his last season under a $35 million, three-year contract that was finalized in March 2023.

Hoerner was a key performer last year as Chicago won 92 games and reached the playoffs for the first time since 2020. He batted .297 with seven homers, 61 RBIs and 29 steals in a career-best 156 games. He also won his second Gold Glove.

Asked about his contract situation before the opener against the Nationals, Hoerner provided no indication that a new deal was on the way.

"The priority is on today and this season and making the most of that," he said. "I think the Cubs are gonna have incredibly strong teams for years to come, and it's an incredible place to play. I think looking around the locker room right now though, it's like for anyone looking past this year, whether you're signed here or not, it's taking away from what we have right in front of us right now, which is a really special opportunity."

President of baseball operations Jed Hoyer also stayed quiet when asked about Hoerner and contract talks during the season.

"I think that all those things are personal, both keeping the negotiations in the organization, but like guys have preferences," Hoyer said. "You know some guys feel like they want to focus on the season and put it behind them, and some guys are willing to sort of have their agents have those conversations. Obviously, the player wants to disclose that, that's up to him, but I think it's not my place to talk about that."

Hoerner made his major league debut in September 2019, hitting .282 with three homers and 17 RBIs in 20 games down the stretch. He had a breakout performance in 2022, when he batted .281 with 10 homers, 55 RBIs and 20 steals in 135 games.

Hoerner, who won his first Gold Glove in 2023, is a .282 hitter with 36 homers, 278 RBIs and 131 steals in 705 career games.

Cignetti had a message for Nick Marsh: Leave gold shoes behind

BLOOMINGTON, Ind. (AP) — Curt Cignetti is not about to let the Indiana Hoosiers put flash in front of fundamentals after their first national championship.

Newcomer Nick Marsh apparently found that out in humbling fashion before his first practice with the team.

Chris Carlson / AP

Indiana head coach Curt Cignetti speaks during news conference on Jan. 20 in Miami.

During Cignetti's news conference to preview the start of spring ball, the no-nonsense coach revealed during a discussion about the transfer wide receiver from Michigan State that he chewed out Marsh prior to practice for an equipment faux pas for the old-school program.

Gold shoes.

After praising the production Marsh gave the Spartans over his first two seasons in the Big Ten, with 100 receptions for 1,311 yards and nine touchdowns in 23 games, Cignetti made a point to mention he put Marsh in his place for his choice of cleat color.

"I don't know if that happened to him very often at Michigan State," Cignetti said. "That was a wakeup call."

Perhaps Cignetti was simply trying to use Marsh to send a message to the entire team with a reminder that glamour – or complacency – will get the Hoosiers nowhere in 2026 after winning all 16 of their games in the 2025 season. Whatever his motivation, the 64-year-old Cignetti – who is 27-2 in two seasons at Indiana – quickly softened his tone to seemingly steer the spotlight away from Marsh's first-day mistake.

"He's worked really hard, done a great job for us," Cignetti said.

Classifieds Marketplace

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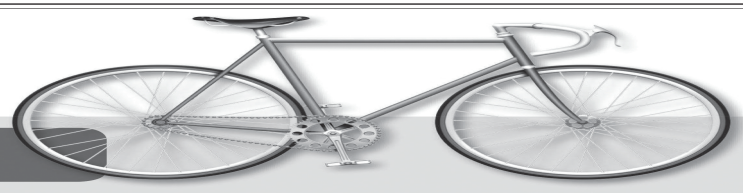

Notice of Foreclosure by Advertisement
Notice is given under section 3212 of the revised judicature act of 1961, 1961 PA 236, MCL 600.3212, that the following mortgage will be foreclosed by a sale of the mortgaged premises, or some part of them, at a public auction sale to the highest bidder for cash or cashier's check at the place of holding the circuit court in Cass County, starting promptly at 10:00 AM, on April 29, 2026. The amount due on the mortgage may be greater on the day of sale. Placing the highest bid at the sale does not automatically entitle the purchaser to free and clear ownership of the property. A potential purchaser is encouraged to contact the county register of deeds office or a title insurance company, either of which may charge a fee for this information:
Name(s) of the mortgagor(s): Ray Bloomer, an unmarried man
Original Mortgagee: Mortgage Electronic Registration Systems, Inc., as nominee for lender and lender's successors and/or assigns
Foreclosing Assignee (if any): PennyMac Loan Services, LLC
Date of Mortgage: November 22, 2017
Date of Mortgage Recording: December 7, 2017
Amount claimed due on date of notice: $98,790.92
Description of the mortgaged premises: Situated in Township of Wayne, Cass County, Michigan, and described as: Commencing North 1127.28 feet from the Southeast corner of the North Three Quarters of the East Half of the East Half of the Southeast Quarter of Section 22, Township 5 South, Range 15 West; thence West 436.14 feet; thence South 277.28 feet; thence East 436.14 feet; thence North 277.28 feet to beginning.
Common street address (if any): 53702 Glenwood Rd, Dowagiac, MI 49047-7423
The redemption period shall be 6 months from the date of such sale, unless determined abandoned in accordance with MCL 600.3241a; or, if the subject real property is used for agricultural purposes as defined by MCL 600.3240(16).
If the property is sold at foreclosure sale under Chapter 32 of the Revised Judicature Act of 1961, pursuant to MCL 600.3278 the borrower will be held responsible to the person who buys the property at the mortgage foreclosure sale or to the mortgage holder for damaging the property during the redemption period.
Attention homeowner: If you are a military service member on active duty, if your period of active duty has concluded less than 90 days ago, or if you have been ordered to active duty, please contact the attorney for the party foreclosing the mortgage at the telephone number stated in this notice.
This notice is from a debt collector.
Date of notice: March 28, 2026
Trott Law, P.C.
31440 Northwestern Hwy, Suite 145
Farmington Hills, MI 48334
(248) 642-2515 1588221 (03-28)(04-18)

Regular Meeting Summary
Meeting called to order at 6:30 pm and the pledge of allegiance was recited.
All Present- Braman, Honn, Behnke, Barnes, Stockwell.
Public Comment was offered and heard.
Agenda, Minutes, and Bills and Claims in the amount of $96,284.47 were approved.
Public Hearing on Tax Millage was open; closed with no comments presented.
Updates and Reports were given.
The following Motion and Resolutions were approved:
1. Amend and increase Building Department budget by $44,500.
2. Approval of the Cass County Early Voting Site Agreement.
3. Approval of the Russom Park request for $8,400 towards Fertilization and Turf quote (50% of the costs).
4. Approval of Wet Well liner in the amount of $18,405 for Indian Lake Sewer.
Public Comment was offered and heard.
Clerk Honn requested a Special Meeting on March 26th at 9am to vote on the General Appropriations (budget) and contracts.
Meeting adjourned at 7:32pm.
Detailed minutes are available on the township website: www.silvercreektwpmi.gov JESS HONN, CLERK

Attention homeowner: If you are a military service member on active duty, if your period of active duty has concluded less than 90 days ago, or if you have been ordered to active duty, please contact the attorney for the party foreclosing the mortgage at the telephone number stated in this notice.
Notice of foreclosure by advertisement. Notice is given under section 3212 of the revised judicature act of 1961, 1961 PA 236, MCL 600.3212, that the following mortgage will be foreclosed by a sale of the mortgaged premises, or some part of them, at a public auction sale to the highest bidder for cash or cashier's check at the place of holding the circuit court in Cass County, starting promptly at 10:00 AM on APRIL 29, 2026. The amount due on the mortgage may be greater on the day of the sale. Placing the highest bid at the sale does not automatically entitle the purchaser to free and clear ownership of the property. A potential purchaser is encouraged to contact the county register of deeds office or a title insurance company, either of which may charge a fee for this information.
Default has been made in the conditions of a mortgage made by Bernice L. Crawford, a single woman, to The CIT Group/Sales Financing, Inc., a Delaware Corporation, Mortgagee, dated November 9, 1998 and recorded November 12, 1998 in Liber 681, Page 1291 Cass County Records, Michigan. Said mortgage is now held by U.S. Bank National Association, as Trustee, for Lehman ABS Manufactured Housing Contract Senior/Subordinate Asset-Backed Certificate Trust, Series 2001-B, by assignment. There is claimed to be due at the date hereof the sum of Eighteen Thousand Three Hundred Six and 50/100 Dollars ($18,306.50).
Under the power of sale contained in said mortgage and the statute in such case made and provided, notice is hereby given that said mortgage will be foreclosed by a sale of the mortgaged premises, or some part of them, at public venue at the place of holding the circuit court within Cass County, Michigan at 10:00 AM on APRIL 29, 2026.
Said premises are located in the Township of Calvin, Cass County Michigan, and are described as:
The East half of the Northeast Quarter of Section 13, Town 7 South, Range 14 West, excepting therefrom, the South 1105.5 feet thereof. Also excepting therefrom, the North 11.65 5/8 chains thereof.Also excepting therefrom, Beginning 6.65 5/8 chains South of the Northeast corner of Section 13, Town 7 South, Range 14 West; thence South 20 rods; thence West 80 rods; thence North 20 rods; thence East 80 rods to the point of beginning.Also excepting therefrom, The North four (4) Rods of the south Fifty-one (51) Rods of the East half of the Northeast quarter of Section 13, Town 7 South, Range 14 West, Calvin Township, Cass County, Michigan.Also excepting therefrom, The North ten (10) Rods of the south forty-seven (47) Rods of the East half of the Northeast Quarter of Section 13, Town 7 South, Range 14 West, Calvin Township, Cass County, Michigan.Also excepting therefrom, Commencing 51 Rods North of the Southwest corner of the East half of the Northeast quarter; thence North 264 feet; thence East to the Section Line; thence South 264 feet; thence West to the point of beginning. Section 13, Town 7 South, Range 14 West.Also excepting therefrom, Part of the East Half of the Northeast Quarter of Section 13, Town 7 South, Range 14 West, described as: From the Northeast corner of said Section 13, measure North 89 degrees 25'20" West, along the North line of said Section, 1328.03 feet to the Northwest corner of the East Half of the Northeast Quarter of said Section; thence South along the East Eighth line of said Section, 769.32 feet to the point of beginning of the land herein described; thence South 89 degrees 25'20" East, 182.00 feet; thence South 125.00 feet; thence North 89 degrees 25'20" West, 182.00 feet to the East Eighth line of said Section; thence North along the Eighth line, 125.00 feet to the point of beginning.Also excepting therefrom pursuant to the partial release recorded in Liber 1029, Page 832, FROM THE NORTHEAST CORNER OF SECTION 13, TOWN 7 SOUTH, RANGE 14 WEST, MEASURE N88 DEGREES 53'06"W, ALONG THE NORTH SECTION LINE, 1327.37 FEET TO THE EAST EIGHTH LINE OF SAID SECTION; THENCE MEASURE S00 DEGREES 50' 15W, ALONG SAID LINE, 894.32 FEET TO THE POINT OF BEGINNING OF THE LAND HEREIN DESCRIBED; THENCE S88 DEGREES 53'10"E (PREVIOUSLY DESCRIBED AS S89 DEGREES 25'20"E) 182.00 FEET; THENCE N00 DEGREES 50 15 E (PREVIOUSLY DESCRIBED AS NORTH) 125.00 FEET TO THE SOUTH LINE OF THE NORTH 23.3125 ACRES OF THE EAST HALF OF THE NORTHEAST QUARTER OF SAID SECTION; THENCE S88 DEGREES 53' 10" E ALONG LINE, 466.56 FEET; THENCE S00 DEGREES 50'15" W, PARALLEL WITH THE EAST EIGHTH LINE, 371.42 FEET; THENCE N88 DEGREES 53'10" W 648.56 FEET TO THE EAST EIGHTH LINE; THENCE N00 DEGREES 50'15"E, ALONG SAID LINE, 246.42 FEET TO THE POINT OF BEGINNING.
64277 Union Rd, Vandalia, Michigan 49095
The redemption period shall be 12 months from the date of such sale, unless determined abandoned in accordance with MCLA §600.3241a, in which case the redemption period shall be 30 days from the date of such sale.
If the property is sold at foreclosure sale, pursuant to MCL 600.3278, the borrower will be held responsible to the person who buys the property at the mortgage foreclosure sale or to the mortgage holder for damage to the property during the redemption period. FinCEN reporting will be required of all successful purchasers, absent a lawful exemption.
Dated: March 28, 2026
File No. 26-002985
Firm Name: Orlans Law Group PLLC
Firm Address: 1650 West Big Beaver Road, Troy MI 48084
Firm Phone Number: (248) 502.1400 (03-28)(04-18)

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0900 LEGALS

STATE OF MICHIGAN
PROBATE COURT
Cass COUNTY

NOTICE TO CREDITORS
Decedent's Estate

CASE NO.
2025-328-DE

Estate of:
Arthur Eugene Middleton, Deceased
Date of birth: 07/26/1935

TO ALL CREDITORS: *

NOTICE TO CREDITORS:
The decedent, Arthur Eugene Middleton, died 11/19/2024. Creditors of the decedent are notified that all claims against the estate will be forever barred unless presented to Robert A. Middleton, personal representative, or to both the probate court at 203 King St., Dowagiac, MI 49047 and the personal representative within 4 months after the date of publication of this notice.

Date 03/28/2026

Thomas D. Swisher P37931
Attorney name Bar no.
213 Pennsylvania Ave, P.O. Box 115
Address
Dowagiac, MI 49047
City, state, zip
269-783-1609
Telephone

Robert A. Middleton
Personal representative
203 King St.
Address
Dowagiac, MI 49047
City, state, zip
269-259-1977
Telephone

STATE OF MICHIGAN
PROBATE COURT
CASS COUNTY

NOTICE TO CREDITORS
Decedent's Estate

CASE NO. and JUDGE
2026-059-DE

Court address Court telephone no.
60296 M-62,
Cassopolis, MI 49031
(269) 445-4475

Estate of:
Lyle Frederick Bandurski
Date of Birth: * March 30,1960

TO ALL CREDITORS: **

NOTICE TO CREDITORS:
The decedent, Lyle Frederick Bandurski, died 102/09/2026. Creditors of the decedent are notified that all claims against the estate will be forever barred unless presented to Amil David Bandurski, aka David Bandurski, personal representative, or to both the probate court at 60296 M-62, Cassopolis, MI 49031 and the personal representative within 4 months after the date of publication of this notice.

Date: 03/19/2026

Elizabeth M. Siefker P83791
Attorney name Bar no.
201 W. Big Beaver, Ste 1200
Address
Troy, MI 48084
City, state, zip
(517)827-3235
Telephone no.

Amil David Bandurski, aka David Bandurski
Personal representative
11043 Gast Rd.
Address
Bridgman, MI 49106
City, state, zip
(269)932-5209
Telephone no.

STATE OF MICHIGAN
43RD JUDICIAL COURT - FAMILY DIVISION
COUNTY OF CASS

PUBLICATION OF PARENTAL-RIGHTS TERMINATION HEARING

CASE NO.
24000095
PETITION NO.
24-184-NA

TO: Leia Spicer
Address Unknown

IN THE MATTER OF: K.S.
A hearing regarding termination of parental rights will be conducted by the court on April 21, 2026, at 1:30p.m. in Cass County Family Court, Hearing Room #18, 60296 M-62, Cassopolis, MI 49031 before Referee Leigh Feldman (P61475).
This hearing may result in the termination of your parental rights.
You have the right to an attorney. There is no right to a jury at this hearing.
IT IS THEREFORE ORDERED that Leia Spicer personally appear before the court at the time and place stated above.

0900 LEGALS

STATE OF MICHIGAN
PROBATE COURT
COUNTY OF Cass

NOTICE TO CREDITORS
Decedent's Estate

CASE NO. and JUDGE
2026-068-DE

Estate of: Morton Arnold Case
Date of birth: 01/17/1931

TO ALL CREDITORS: *

NOTICE TO CREDITORS:
The decedent, Morton Arnold Case, died 12/31/2025. Creditors of the decedent are notified that all claims against the estate will be forever barred unless presented to Catherine Case-Bradley, personal representative, or to both the probate court at 60296 M-62, Cassopolis, MI 49031 and the personal representative within 4 months after the date of publication of this notice.

Date 03/20/2026

Heidi A. Duncan P76168
Attorney name Bar no.
107 Pennsylvania Ave
Address
Dowagiac, MI 49047
City, State, Zip
269-782-9895
Telephone no.

Catherine Case-Bradley
Personal representative
9261 Cleveland Ave.
Address
Baroda, MI 49101
City, state, zip

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING
VILLAGE OF VANDALIA

PROPOSED BUDGET, TRUTH IN TAXATION HEARING, AND MILLAGE RATE PROPOSAL

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the Village Council of the Village of Vandalia, Cass County, Michigan, will hold a Public Hearing on the proposed Village Budget for the fiscal year February 2026 through February 2027, including a Truth in Taxation Hearing regarding the proposed property tax millage rate to support the proposed budget.

The public hearing will be held on:
Tuesday, April 7, 2026 at 6:00pm
Village of Vandalia Hall
18035 State Street
Vandalia, Michigan 49095

The purpose of this hearing is to provide an opportunity for citizens of the Village of Vandalia to review and comment on the proposed Village Budget for the fiscal year February 2026 through February 2027 and to discuss the proposed property tax millage rate necessary to support that budget.

THE PROPERTY TAX MILLAGE RATE PROPOSED TO BE LEVIED TO SUPPORT THE PROPOSED BUDGET WILL BE A SUBJECT OF THIS HEARING.

A copy of the proposed Village Budget for the fiscal year February 2026 through February 2027 is available for public inspection during regular business hours at the Village of Vandalia Hall, 18035 State Street, Vandalia, Michigan 49095.

Written comments may also be submitted to the Village Clerk prior to the hearing.

The Village Council encourages residents and taxpayers to attend this hearing and provide input regarding the proposed budget and millage rate for the upcoming fiscal year.

Village of Vandalia
By Order of the Village Council
Village Clerk

PUBLICATION NOTICE

In the Matter of the Lucille June Swartz Trust dated December 17, 2021
Social Security No. xxx-xx- 0293

TO ALL INTERESTED PERSONS;
Your interest in the property of the deceased may be barred or affected by this Notice.

NOTICE: Please take notice that Lucille June Swartz died on March 13, 2026. At the time of death, there were no assets requiring administration through Court proceedings. All assets were jointly held, had designed succession or were part of the Lucille June Swartz Trust dated December 17, 2021. Kent Figy is the Trustee. The deceased lived at 3930 Hidden Valley Trail South, Niles, MI 49120.
Creditors of the deceased are notified that all claims against the deceased will be forever barred unless presented to the Trustee or the attorney for the Trust or to both within four (4) months of the date of publication of this Notice. Notice is further given that the Trust assets will then be assigned to persons designated in the Trust.

Dated: March 24, 2026

John R. Colip (P25250),
Attorney for Trustee
12 Longmeadow Village Drive, Suite 100
Niles, MI 49120
Phone: (269) 695-3849

Kent Figy, Trustee
3930 Hidden Valley Trail South
Niles, MI 49120
Phone: (269)591-9026

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People Do Read Small Ads. You Did!

AS A DEBT COLLECTOR, WE ARE ATTEMPTING TO COLLECT A DEBT AND ANY INFORMATION OBTAINED WILL BE USED FOR THAT PURPOSE. ATTENTION HOMEOWNER: IF YOU ARE A MILITARY SERVICE MEMBER ON ACTIVE DUTY, IF YOUR PERIOD OF ACTIVE DUTY HAS CONCLUDED LESS THAN 90 DAYS AGO, OR IF YOU HAVE BEEN ORDERED TO ACTIVE DUTY, PLEASE CONTACT THE ATTORNEY FOR THE PARTY FORECLOSING THE MORTGAGE AT THE TELEPHONE NUMBER STATED IN THIS NOTICE. Notice of Foreclosure by Advertisement – Notice is given under section 3212 of the revised judicature act of 1961, 1961 PA 236, MCL 600.3212, that the following mortgage will be foreclosed by a sale of the mortgaged premises, or some part of them, at a public auction sale to the highest bidder for cash or cashier's check at the place of holding the circuit court in Cass County, starting promptly at 10:00 AM. on April 15, 2026. The amount due on the mortgage may be greater on the day of the sale. Placing the highest bid at the sale does not automatically entitle the purchaser to free and clear ownership of the property. A potential purchaser is encouraged to contact the county register of deeds office or a title insurance company, either of which may charge a fee for this information. Default having been made in the terms and conditions of a certain mortgage made by James Snyder and Shella Ann Havener of Cass County, Michigan, Mortgagor to Fifth Third Bank (Western Michigan) dated the 28th day of May, 2019, and recorded in the office of the Register of Deeds, for the County of Cass and State of Michigan, on the 3rd day of July, 2019, Book 1157, Page 24, Instrument No. 154453 of the Cass County Records on which mortgage there is claimed to be due, at the date of this notice, for principal of $96,044.48 plus accrued interest at 5.00000% percent per annum. Which said premises are described as follows: All that certain piece or parcel of land situated in the Town of Howard, in the County of Cass and State of Michigan and described as follows to wit: Lot 50 Yankee Heights, according to the plat thereof recorded in Liber 1 of Plats, Page 153, Cass County Records Commonly known as: 2550 Juniper Road, Niles, MI 49120 Tax ID: 1402022005000 If the property is sold at a foreclosure sale the borrower, pursuant to MCLA 600.3278 will be held responsible to the person who buys the property at the mortgage foreclosure sale or to the mortgage holder for damaging the property during the redemption period. The redemption period shall be six months from the date of such sale, unless determined abandoned in accordance with MCL 600.3241a, in which case the redemption period shall be 30 days from the date of such sale. FinCEN reporting will be required of all successful purchasers, absent a lawful exemption. Dated: March 14, 2026, By: Benjamin N. Hoen #P-81415 Weltman, Weinberg & Reis Co., L.P.A. 5990 West Creek Road, Suite 200 Independence, OH 44131 Telephone: 216-739-5100 Fax: 216-363-4034 Email: bhoen@weltman.com WWR#: 22-000663-1 (03-14)(04-04)

SHORT FORECLOSURE NOTICE - CASS COUNTY Notice of Foreclosure by Advertisement. Notice is given under section 3212 of the revised judicature act of 1961, 1961 PA 236, MCL 600.3212, that the following mortgage will be foreclosed by a sale of the mortgaged premises, or some part of them, at a public auction sale to the highest bidder for cash or cashier's check at the place of holding the circuit court in Cass County, starting promptly at 10:00 AM, on May 06, 2026. The amount due on the mortgage may be greater on the day of the sale. Placing the highest bid at the sale does not automatically entitle the purchaser to free and clear ownership of the property. A potential purchaser is encouraged to contact the county register of deeds office or a title insurance company, either of which may charge a fee for this information. MORTGAGE: Mortgagor(s): Lynn Marie Clark, a single woman Original Mortgagee: The Huntington National Bank, successor by merger to FMB Community Bank Date of mortgage: June 30, 1995 Recorded on July 20, 1995, Liber 593, on Page 185, and re-recorded via Loan Modification recorded on July 21, 1998 in Liber 669, on Page 782 Foreclosing Assignee (if any): None Amount claimed to be due at the date hereof: Two Thousand Eighteen and 72/100 Dollars ($2,018.72) Mortgaged premises: Situated in Cass County, and described as: COMMENCING ON THE SOUTH LINE OF SECTION FOUR, TOWNSHIP SEVEN SOUTH OF RANGE SIXTEEN WEST, AT A POINT 1372 FEET WEST OF THE SOUTHEAST CORNER OF SAID SECTION; THENCE WEST 116.2 FEET; THENCE NORTH AT RIGHT ANGLES TO THE SOUTH LINE OF SAID SECTION, 375 FEET; THENCE EAST 116.2 FEET; THENCE SOUTH 375 FEET TO THE PLACE OF BEGINNING Commonly known as 2743 White St, Niles, MI 49120 The redemption period will be 12 month from the date of such sale, unless abandoned under MCL 600.3241a, in which case the redemption period will be 30 days from the date of such sale, or 15 days from the MCL 600.3241a(b) notice, whichever is later; or unless extinguished pursuant to MCL 600.3238. If the above referenced property is sold at a foreclosure sale under Chapter 32 of Act 236 of 1961, under MCL 600.3278, the borrower will be held responsible to the person who buys the property at the mortgage foreclosure sale or to the mortgage holder for damaging the property during the redemption period. Attention homeowner: If you are a military service member on active duty, if your period of active duty has concluded less than 90 days ago, or if you have been ordered to active duty, please contact the attorney for the party foreclosing the mortgage at the telephone number stated in this notice. The Huntington National Bank Mortgagee/Assignee Schneiderman & Sherman P.C. 23938 Research Dr, Suite 300 Farmington Hills, MI 48335 248.539.7400 1588637 (03-28)(04-18)

FORECLOSURE NOTICE (ALL COUNTIES) AS A DEBT COLLECTOR, WE ARE ATTEMPTING TO COLLECT A DEBT AND ANY INFORMATION OBTAINED WILL BE USED FOR THAT PURPOSE. ATTENTION HOMEOWNER: IF YOU ARE A MILITARY SERVICE MEMBER ON ACTIVE DUTY, IF YOUR PERIOD OF ACTIVE DUTY HAS CONCLUDED LESS THAN 90 DAYS AGO, OR IF YOU HAVE BEEN ORDERED TO ACTIVE DUTY, PLEASE CONTACT THE ATTORNEY FOR THE PARTY FORECLOSING THE MORTGAGE AT THE TELEPHONE NUMBER STATED IN THIS NOTICE. Notice of Foreclosure by Advertisement – Notice is given under section 3212 of the revised judicature act of 1961, 1961 PA 236, MCL 600.3212, that the following mortgage will be foreclosed by a sale of the mortgaged premises, or some part of them, at a public auction sale to the highest bidder for cash or cashier's check at the place of holding the circuit court in Cass County, starting promptly at 10:00 AM a.m./p.m. on April 29, 2026. The amount due on the mortgage may be greater on the day of the sale. Placing the highest bid at the sale does not automatically entitle the purchaser to free and clear ownership of the property. A potential purchaser is encouraged to contact the county register of deeds office or a title insurance company, either of which may charge a fee for this information. Default having been made in the terms and conditions of a certain mortgage made by Robert L Saxton of Cass County, Michigan, Mortgagor to Fifth Third Bank (Western Michigan) dated the 19th day of September, 2013, and recorded in the office of the Register of Deeds, for the County of Cass and State of Michigan, on the 11th day of October, 2013, Liber 1067, Page 1885, of the Cass County Records on which mortgage there is claimed to be due, at the date of this notice, for principal of $31,137.87 plus accrued interest at 7.99000% percent per annum. Which said premises are described as follows: All that certain piece or parcel of land situated in the Township of LaGrange, in the County of Cass and State of Michigan and described as follows to wit: THE WEST HALF OF THE SOUTH HALF OF LOT 14 AND THE WEST HALF OF LOT 15, EXCEPT THE SOUTH 1 ROD, BLOCK 1 SOUTH, RANGE 3 EAST, ORIGINAL PLAT, ACCORDING TO THE RECORDED PLAT THEREOF. ALSO THE WEST ONE-HALF OF LOT NUMBER 16; AND 1 ROD OFF THE SOUTH SIDE OF THE WEST ONE-HALF OF LOT NUMBER 15; ALL IN BLOCK 1 SOUTH, RANGE 3 EAST, ACCORDING TO THE RECORDED PLAT THEREO Commonly known as: 311 East Jefferson Street, Cassopolis, MI 49031 Tax ID: 14-041-115-015-00 If the property is sold at a foreclosure sale the borrower, pursuant to MCLA 600.3278 will be held responsible to the person who buys the property at the mortgage foreclosure sale or to the mortgage holder for damaging the property during the redemption period. The redemption period shall be six months from the date of such sale, unless determined abandoned in accordance with MCL 600.3241a, in which case the redemption period shall be 30 days from the date of such sale. FinCEN reporting will be required of all successful purchasers, absent a lawful exception. Dated: March 28, 2026 By: Benjamin N. Hoen #P-81415 Weltman, Weinberg & Reis Co., L.P.A. 5990 West Creek Road, Suite 200 Independence, OH 44131 Telephone: 216-739-5100 Fax: 216-363-4034 Email:bhoen@weltman.com WWR#: 26-000111-1 (03-28)(04-18)

OUTDOORS

Submitting hunting or fishing photos

Have a behemoth buck, a tremendous turkey or super-sized salmon? Please submit photos to sports@TheHP.com.

Your photo must be in focus, all persons in the photo must be identified, and the general location of the hunt must be provided (for example, 10-point buck shot in Benton Township, black bear shot near Munising, Mich., etc.)

Joint research team continues moose survival study effort

By ANDREW HENION
Michigan DNR

Michigan DNR photo

Morgan Lucot, a Michigan Department of Natural Resources wildlife biologist based in Baraga, injects a collared moose with a drug to bring it out of sedation.

It's an unusually warm February day in the western Upper Peninsula as a collaborative team of wildlife experts works to fit a radio collar around the neck of an immobilized moose and collect blood and fecal samples from the animal.

Speed and skill are crucial.

Too much stress or time under anesthesia puts the 700-pound bull at risk.

A separate helicopter crew from Texas-based Heliwild had flushed the moose from the Iron County woods and shot it with a tranquilizer dart, a necessary but taxing procedure for the majestic creature.

The 45-degree temperature produces another risk factor for an animal whose thick, heavy coat was designed for freezing cold.

The ground team finishes its work, injects the moose with a drug that reverses sedation and backs away. After a few anxious minutes, the massive animal awakens, rises unsteadily and ambles into the thick woods.

The entire process takes less than 45 minutes.

"Great job everyone," says Kristie Sitar, a veteran wildlife biologist with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, as the crew exchanges high-fives.

This procedure was repeated several dozen times in mid-February as some 40 people from the DNR, Keweenaw Bay Indian Community, Northern Michigan University and the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians participated in an ongoing research project investigating moose survival in the Upper Peninsula.

Over four days, the collaborative group accomplished its goal of collaring 41 moose and recollaring two moose from a smaller effort last year. In all, 56 collared moose in the western U.P. are now providing researchers with valuable information on their health and movements.

"This was a successful capture event, and the entire team worked together incredibly well to reach our goal," said Tyler Petroelje, northern Michigan wildlife research specialist for the DNR. "These moose, and the biological samples and collar data they provide, will be invaluable in helping us better understand survival and factors that are limiting population growth in the core moose herd."

Minimizing risk

On the first morning, Feb. 14, fog delayed the start of captures by several hours. Air crews spent the afternoon searching for moose wallowing in the deep, heavy snow of the Marquette County forests.

Crews were able to capture, collar and release four moose that first day. Unfortunately, two other moose died in the recovery process after being administered the sedation-reversing drugs. Both moose – a mature cow and a young bull – appeared healthy and had normal vital signs throughout their respective procedures.

A team that included Petroelje and Dr. Scott Larsen, veterinarian for the DNR's Wildlife Division, conducted field necropsies by floodlight on both moose late on Feb. 14. The animals' tissues and organs were also later examined at the DNR's Wildlife Disease Laboratory in Lansing.

Larsen said initial evaluation of the bull showed no signs of underlying disease, but the female moose had significant disease in her lungs and liver that likely complicated her immobilization and led to her death.

The capture team reviewed its protocols and found no significant issues. Still, to minimize risk, they took measures to further shorten the time each moose would be under anesthesia.

Over all four days, Feb. 14-17, the team would capture, collar and release 41 moose successfully. During the 2025 effort, all 20 moose captured were collared and released successfully.

"The work we do involves risks associated with wildlife capture, and we take great precautions to ensure those risks are minimized," Petroelje said. "When we consider collaring any wildlife, we do so because the value of information gained is greater than those associated risks."

Expanding research capacity

Data from the captures is providing insights into why the moose population in the core range of Baraga, Iron and Marquette counties has stagnated at about 300 animals, according to the DNR's 2025 aerial survey.

Is it disease? Predation? Vehicle collisions? Warming temperatures? Changing habitat? Or a combination of these and possibly other factors?

Getting enough moose collared in 2025 and 2026 was an important step in the long-term research project. Now, researchers from the DNR, KBIC and NMU are working together to interpret tracking data from the collars, along with corresponding drone surveys, to come up with evidence-based reasons for the stagnant moose population.

In less than three weeks, researchers have already collected 22,000 GPS locations from the newly collared moose. That's in addition to the more than 200,000 GPS locations collected from the moose collared in 2025.

Project funding comes mostly from federal grants, tribal partnerships and university resources, with only about 1 percent coming from state hunting and fishing license fees.

Providing additional financial and land-access support are conservation groups, including the Nature Conservancy and Safari Club International Michigan Involvement Committee, federal land managers and commercial forest landowners.

The KBIC recently secured a $684,112 grant from the U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs to support the project and KBIC staff salaries for two more years, expanding research capacity through 2028.

Erin Johnston, KBIC's wildlife and habitat manager, played a key role in securing the grant and in the capture operation, assisting on two moose captures as part of an aerial team.

"Similar to last year, staff from DNR, KBIC and NMU seamlessly integrated into aerial and ground teams for another successful moose capture-and-collar event," Johnston said. "Ground teams had more opportunity to handle moose this year. Although the warm temperatures caused delays in the aircraft flying in the morning, the sunshine was a welcome sight and sensation while we waited in anticipation to hear news from handling teams of successful capture, collar and release."

Kyle Seppanen, wildlife coordinator for the KBIC, served on a snowmobile-riding ground team nicknamed "Hemlock Nibbler" along with Jeff Lukowski of the DNR and Eric Clark of the Sault Tribe. That team assisted Sitar and fellow DNR wildlife biologist Clay Buchanan with successfully collaring the 700-pound bull in Iron County.

"It will be exciting to see what additional information we can gather now that we have 56 collared moose on the landscape," said Seppanen, who assisted on seven captures. "Where are the moose going? What habitats are they using and when? As one of two drone operators on the project, I am looking forward to confirming births this spring and tracking calf survival throughout the remainder of the year."

Nerve center

The project nerve center was a base operation run out of Van Riper State Park near Champion by Erin Largent, a DNR wildlife research technician and master's degree student at NMU.

Largent was instrumental in just about every aspect of the initiative – from contacting landowners across the study area to secure permissions to access moose on private lands, to ordering all capture equipment and programming the GPS collars, to organizing snowmobiles, spotter planes and the helicopter moose-darting team.

Can koalas pull off genetic comeback?

By KARL HILLE
The Baltimore Sun (TNS)

Cute but cantankerous, koalas are making a surprising recovery from a genetic bottleneck, with their once most-threatened populations now displaying a surprising diversity.

"It looks like they're in bad shape, but if you dig further, we're actually finding that there's recovery from the bottleneck," Collin Ahrens, an evolutionary biologist at the independent research company Cesar Australia, told Scientific American.

Geneticists theorize that once populations dip below the bottleneck level, inbreeding and fatal mutations lead to an inevitable extinction, according to the University of California, Berkeley's Understanding Evolution website. The theory doesn't rule out rebounds, but the koala now ranks among a few species observed escaping a genetic bottleneck, in this case caused by overhunting that peaked 100 years ago.

Australian researchers sampled DNA from 418 koalas in 27 populations across three states to measure their genetic diversity. They found a surprise in Victoria, where koala populations have grown so much that the government is trying to limit their numbers.

In 1920, scientists estimated only 500 to 1,000 koalas remained in Victoria, whereas today nearly half a million live in the state. That growth is remarkable because koalas sleep nearly 20 hours a day.

Sarett Nature Center

Sarett Nature Stewards: 2-4 p.m. each Wednesday. This program is a way to experience Sarett in a whole different way. By being a nature steward you are helping Sarett but you also gain a sense of well-being. Sarett's crew will teach you many different skills such as collecting viable seeds for future planting, how to identify invasive species from native ones, removing invasive plants, and more. Ages 10+.

Birding for Beginners: 9-11 a.m. March 28, April 11, April 18 and May 2. This introduction will cover everything you need to know about birding, whether you are wondering which birds are visiting your feeders or if you want to go far afield. Sarett will even provide binoculars for you to use during class time. Cost is $5 per class for members, $7 for non-members. Call 927-4832 to register.

Email info for Get Outdoors to sports@TheHP.com, or call 429-1294 by Monday.

As warm climate brings bears out of hibernation earlier, backyard care is key to coexistence

By EMMA GREEN
VTDigger

Vermonters usually put out bird feeders to attract winged visitors who fill their yards with song and color. But they could attract a far less dainty visitor: black bears.

As bears emerge from their dens in early spring, they're on the search for food. That can lead them to backyard beehives, birdfeeders, compost piles and even chicken coops.

"They're super adaptable, they're very curious, they're always looking for the next best meal," said Jaclyn Comeau, bear biologist at the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department.

Reports of bear incidents in Vermont have grown steeply over the past decade, according to department data. While some of that increase can be attributed to changes that made reporting incidents easier, the rise is related to an interconnected set of factors, including changes in the state's bear population and in human development, Comeau said.

"We have slowly been teaching our bears that our backyards are a good place to find high-calorie, easily accessible foods," Comeau said. "They have figured that out, they're not forgetting it, and we continue to keep reinforcing that behavior."

The state's bear population has grown over recent years, from between 4,000 and 6,000 bears in 2018 to between 6,500 and 8,000 bears in 2024, according to population estimates by the state. The latest count is nearly double the objective of 3,500 to 5,500 bears, as outlined by a Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department population model.

The time of year that bears emerge from their dens has also crept earlier and earlier over past decades, Comeau said, likely driven in part by a changing climate that has made Vermont winters shorter and less severe. In Vermont, the emergence has shifted about two weeks earlier over the past 15 or so years, she said, from around April 1 to mid-March.

That means Vermonters need to take steps earlier in the season to prevent bears from making a meal in their backyards, by removing or bear-proofing potential food sources.

When bears get food from human sources, they often keep coming back for more, Comeau said. That repeated behavior can lead to conflict with bears, she said, and can be passed down generationally as moms teach cubs where to look for food.

After all, a bear in a yard today means more bears likely in the future.

That's especially salient in Vermont. Bears live everywhere in the state besides the Champlain Islands, according to the department.

Comeau said removing food sources early in the season can help head off conflict with bears throughout the rest of the year. That includes taking down bird feeders, storing trash and compost in bear-resistant containers and putting electric fences around chicken coops and bee hives.

Being proactive is the best way to prevent problems, Comeau said, and to protect bears.

"Don't wait until the bear gets into your garbage before you find a more secure way to store it. Don't wait for the bear to hit your birdfeeder to tell you it's time to take it in," Comeau said. "We (humans) are playing a big role in this, and it really is up to us if we want to see less bears raiding our garbage cans and raiding our chicken coops."

According to Tom Rogers, executive director at Stowe Land Trust, human development is a driver of increased conflict with bears – and another area where human action can help reduce conflict. Rogers previously worked on bear-human conflict with the Fish and Wildlife Department.

"We are encroaching on bear habitat more and more," Rogers said. "As the state is becoming more developed and habitat becomes more fragmented, conflicts with bears, as with any other wildlife, are going to be more inevitable."

With their typical habitat fragmented, bears have to pass through human-settled areas more often, Rogers said, which creates opportunities for them to learn that humans are a source of food.

Stowe Land Trust, along with other conservation organizations, is working to protect corridors of land that connect large areas of forest, such as the Shutesville Hill wildlife corridor, which connects the Green Mountains and the Worcester Range. Rogers hopes those projects will help reduce conflicts with bears.

Toby Talbot / AP

A black bear grazes in a field in Calais, Vermont.

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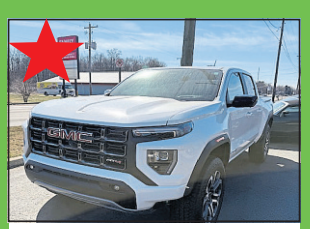

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